

The World of Ezekiel, 593 B.C.



The Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL INTRODUCTION

1. Title. In the Hebrew the book is entitled with the name of its author, *Yechezqe'l*, signifying “whom God will strengthen.” This name, like that of many others of the saints of old, was singularly appropriate to its bearer’s life and work.

In the KJV, as well as in the Hebrew, the book is placed third among the writings of the four greater prophets. This is certainly its true chronological position, for it places the book between those of Ezekiel’s two great contemporaries. Of these Jeremiah began his prophecies long before, and Daniel continued his prophecies long afterward.

2. Authorship. Until recent years the authenticity and canonicity of the book of Ezekiel have not been seriously assailed. However, conservative scholars as well as many of the more critical school still hold to the traditional position that Ezekiel himself was the author of the compilation of prophetic utterances that now bear his name.

Nothing is known concerning the personal history of the prophet except what may be gathered from the book itself and from the circumstances of the times in which the author lived. He is not mentioned in any other book of the OT, and his writings are never directly quoted in the New (except, perhaps, 2 Cor. 6:17), although there are many allusions to his imagery, especially in the book of Revelation. Outside the Bible he is mentioned only by Josephus (*Antiquities* x. 5. 1; 6. 3; 7. 2; 8. 2), and by Jesus son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus 49:8), neither source contributing any detail of importance.

Ezekiel calls himself “the priest, the son of Buzi” (ch. 1:3). Of Buzi nothing is known. The fact that Ezekiel was included among “all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour” (2 Kings 24:14) who were taken away in Jehoiachin’s captivity (597 B.C.; see on Eze. 1:2), indicates that he was probably a member of Jerusalem’s aristocracy.

How old Ezekiel was when the doom of captivity fell upon him cannot be definitely known. Some suggest that the “thirtieth year” of ch. 1:1 may refer to the 30th year of his life. On this supposition he would have been 25 years old at the time of his exile. According to Josephus, the prophet was then a young man (*Antiquities* x. 6. 3). That he must have been at least comparatively youthful at the time is attested by the fact that one of his prophecies is dated 27 years later in 570, or 571 (see on ch. 29:17), and apparently he exercised his office for some time longer. See Chronological Table of the Prophecies of Ezekiel on p. 572.

Unlike Jeremiah, who remained unmarried (Jer. 16:2), Ezekiel had a wife whom he cherished as the desire of his eyes (Eze. 24:16). She died suddenly in the 9th year of the Captivity (ch. 24:1; see on ch. 1:2), and left the prophet to bear in solitude the great trials of his prophetic office.

3. Historical Setting. Ezekiel began his prophecy in the 5th year of Jehoiachin’s captivity (ch. 1:2), 593/592 B.C. (see Vol. III, pp. 92–94). The northern kingdom of Israel had ceased to exist more than 100 years before, and the overthrow of Judah was rapidly approaching. The Babylonian servitude had already begun when, in the 3d year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem (Dan. 1:1). It is not known how many captives were taken at this time. Among them were some “of the king’s seed, and of the princes” (Dan. 1:3; cf. 2 Kings 24:1).

After 11 years of reign Jehoiakim came to an inglorious end and was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin (597 B.C.; see on 2 Kings 24:1). After a reign of only three months he was carried as a captive, along with 10,000 of his chief people, including Ezekiel, to Babylon (2 Kings 24:12–16; Eze. 1:1, 2; 33:21).

Jehoiachin’s successor, Zedekiah, was no better than his predecessors. In his 11th year (586 B.C.) came the final overthrow of Judah (2 Kings 25:1–11). The remnant of the people were taken, the Temple burned, and Jerusalem destroyed. Only a few of the “poor of the land” were left to be vinedressers and husbandmen (2 Kings 25:12).

Such were the turbulent times in which Ezekiel, while yet a young man, was called to the prophetic office. The prospects were far from bright. The stroke of judgment that had already fallen on Jerusalem, instead of sobering the inhabitants of Judah, seemed only to plunge them deeper into apostasy and vice. Nor were the exiles on the river Chebar

disposed to be “exercised” by the “chastening” (Heb. 12:11). They too continued rebellious and idolatrous (Eze. 2:3; 20:39), and showed little disposition toward thorough reform.

4. Theme. The messages of the book of Ezekiel clarify the purpose of God for His people in the bitter experience of the Babylonian captivity. For centuries the prophets had counseled and warned Israel, yet the nation sank ever deeper into apostasy. Eventually, it became evident that the chosen people would never attain to God’s objectives for them as a nation (see pp. 26–30) unless drastic means were used to teach them lessons of obedience to, and cooperation with, God. Accordingly, He permitted them to learn in adversity lessons they had refused to learn during times of prosperity (see p. 31).

Strange to say, it was the leaders of Israel who, by precept and example, led the nation into apostasy (see Isa. 3:12; 9:16; Eze. 34:2–19). At first, apparently, God purposed that only the leaders should be carried into captivity (see Dan. 1:3, 4). The vast majority of the people were to remain in Judea, awaiting there the return of a chastened group of leaders to guide them in the way of God’s choosing. Had the Jews been willing to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, as God intended (see Jer. 27:1–22), the city of Jerusalem and its magnificent Temple would have remained intact (see Jer. 17:25, 27; 38:17), and the century of delay, difficulty, and discouragement that confronted the exiles upon their return from Babylon would have been avoided. But Israel’s stubborn resistance (see Jer. 28:1–14) made their cup of suffering progressively more bitter and brought on a second and then a third deportation (597 and 586 B.C. respectively). “Yokes of wood” were replaced with “yokes of iron” (Jer. 28:13, 14).

But even in captivity divine justice was seasoned with mercy. God came to His people as a teacher, to impress upon them the folly of disobedience and the desirability of cooperating with Him, rather than as a stern judge to punish them. The bitter experiences of the Captivity were not so much retributive in nature as they were remedial. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were commissioned to reveal Heaven’s purpose to men and to elicit cooperation with it. Jeremiah was sent to the Jews who remained in Judea, while Ezekiel carried out a similar mission for those who had already gone into captivity. Daniel was Heaven’s ambassador to the court of Nebuchadnezzar, to make known to him the divine will and to secure his cooperation. The fires of suffering were to burn no hotter than necessary to remove the dross. For a detailed consideration of the role of Daniel in relation to the Captivity, see Introduction to Daniel. For a consideration of the over-all divine purpose for Israel during the Captivity see pp. 29–32; cf. on Dan. 4:17.

The book of Ezekiel consists of two distinct parts. The first, chs. 1:1–33:20 to 33:20, records messages borne by Ezekiel to the captives by the river Chebar, near Babylon, mostly prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The second, chs. 33:21 to 48:35, anticipates, and was designed to inspire hope in, the restoration from captivity. It was God’s intent, through Ezekiel, to make a powerful appeal to the Israel of the Captivity to accept at long last the divine destiny for them. The occasion for such an appeal was particularly appropriate in the light of new historical developments. The plan of the book displays the characteristic gospel style. A number of the messages are devoted to an exposure of the sins of the people. The object is twofold: first, to lead the people into a genuine experience of repentance, and second, to reveal the need of divine aid for future obedience promised in the new covenant. Through ignorance on the one hand, and perverted instruction by corrupt priests, false prophets, and apostate leaders on the other,

the Israelites possessed a greatly distorted picture of the character of God and of God's plan for His people. This erroneous impression Ezekiel sought to correct. He hoped that a new concept of God would be the motivating force to accomplish the needed reform and to impel the people to accept their high destiny. He importuned them to accept the Exile and to abandon their false hope in the ability of Jerusalem to withstand capture. He pleaded with them to permit the Captivity to have its salutary effect upon them. He crowned his appeal with repeated and detailed pictures of the future glory that would ensue upon an acceptance of the conditions. How different the history of Israel would have been had she heeded the impassioned pleas of the seer!

5. Outline. The prophecies of Ezekiel are set down according to a well-considered plan. They fall naturally into two main divisions: the first 33 chapters representing prophecies delivered, at least mainly, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last 15, those delivered after the destruction. The first division may in turn be divided into two parts, with chs. 1–24 devoted to Israel in relation to the Captivity, and ch. 25:1 to 32:32 to judgments on surrounding nations.

Another interesting feature about the prophecies of Ezekiel is their accurate dating. The chronological table on p. 572 shows the dates for the various sections of the book as nearly as they can be tabulated from the chronological data provided by the prophet (compare the chronology of Jeremiah, p. 348).

Each main division subdivides itself naturally into its several sections through the interjection of the expression “and the word of the Lord came unto me.” This phrase appears 29 times throughout the book. The outline follows the plan of the foregoing suggestions:

- I. Prophecies of Judgment Concerning Israel, 1:1 to 24:27.
 - A. First section, 1:1 to 7:27 (5th year, 4th month, 5th day).
 1. The call of Ezekiel, 1:1–3:11 to 3:11.
 - a. The vision of the glory of God, 1:1–28.
 - b. The divine commission to the prophet, 2:1 to 3:11.
 2. The beginning of the prophetic activity, 3:12 to 7:27.
 - a. The hesitation at Chebar, 3:12–16.
 - b. The hesitation rebuked, 3:17–27.
 - c. The siege of Jerusalem symbolically portrayed, 4:1–17.
 - d. The four signs and their interpretation, 5:1–17.
 - e. The mountains of Israel rebuked, 6:1–14.
 - f. The desolation of Israel foretold, 7:1–27.
 - B. Second section, 8:1 to 19:14 (6th year, 6th month, 5th day).
 1. A series of visions while in the Spirit at Jerusalem, 8:1 to 11:25.
 - a. The abominations in the Temple, 8:1–18.
 - b. The work of judgment, 9:1–11.
 - c. The reappearance of the vision of the living creatures, 10:1–22.
 - d. The leaders of the people denounced, 11:1–25.
 2. Two symbolic signs, 12:1–20.
 - a. The attempted escape and capture of Zedekiah illustrated, 12:1–16.
 - b. The terrors of the siege illustrated, 12:17–20.
 3. Discourses revealing the cause and imminence of threatened judgments, 12:21 to 14:23.
 - a. The certainty of the speedy fulfillment, 12:21–28.

- b.* The discourse against false prophets and prophetesses, 13:1–23.
- c.* The testimony against the idolatrous seekers after oracles, 14:1–23.
- 4. Various parables and similitudes, 15:1 to 19:14.
 - a.* The vine tree, 15:1–8.
 - b.* The wretched infant and lewd adulteress, 16:1–63.
 - c.* The two eagles and the vine, 17:1–24.
 - d.* The sour grapes, 18:1–32.
 - e.* The lion’s whelps, 19:1–9.
 - f.* The wasted vine, 19:10–14.
- C. Third section, 20:1 to 23:49 (7th year, 5th month, 10th day).
 - 1. The narrative of Israel’s rebellions, 20:1–49.
 - 2. Various portrayals of threatening judgments, 21:1–32.
 - a.* The sword against Jerusalem, 21:1–7.
 - b.* The sword bright and furbished for the slaughter, 21:8–17.
 - c.* The divination of the king of Babylon, 21:18–27.
 - d.* The sword against Ammon, 21:28–32.
 - 3. A catalogue of Jerusalem’s sins and the resultant doom, 22:1–31.
 - a.* The abominations of princes and people, 22:1–16.
 - b.* The fearful doom of Jerusalem, 22:17–22.
 - c.* The lack of a single intercessor, 22:23–31.
 - 4. The history of apostasy told in a parable, 23:1–49.
- D. Fourth section, 24:1–27 (9th year, 10th month, 10th day).
 - 1. The vision of the boiling pot, 24:1–14.
 - 2. The death of Ezekiel’s wife, 24:15–27.
- II. Prophecies of Judgment Concerning Foreign Nations, 25:1 to 32:32.
 - A. First section, 25:1 to 28:26, the date not specified, but possibly following the message under “D” above.
 - 1. A series of prophecies concerning Israel’s immediate neighbors, 25:1–17.
 - a.* Against the Ammonites, 25:1–7.
 - b.* Against the Moabites, 25:8–11.
 - c.* Against the Edomites, 25:12–14.
 - d.* Against the Philistines, 25:15–17.
 - 2. A series of prophecies concerning Tyre, 26:1 to 28:19.
 - a.* Her fall predicted, 26:1–21.
 - b.* A lamentation over her, 27:1–36.
 - c.* Her prince bewailed, 28:1–10.
 - d.* The origin, history, and destiny of Satan delineated under the figure of the king of Tyre, 28:11–19.
 - 3. A prophecy against Sidon, 28:20–26.
 - B. Second section, 29:1 to 32:32 (various dates), prophecies on Egypt.
 - 1. First division (10th year, 10th month, 12th day).
 - a.* The judgment against Pharaoh, 29:1–7.
 - b.* The desolation of the land of Egypt, 29:8–12.
 - c.* The promise of a return from captivity, 29:13–16.
 - 2. Second division (27th year, 1st month, 1st day of the month [interpolated here to fill out the prediction upon Egypt]).

- a. Egypt to be given to Nebuchadnezzar for his hire, 29:17–20.
- b. The restoration of Israel, 29:21.
3. Third division (no date, probably same as group *a* above): Egypt and her helpers to fall, 30:1–19.
4. Fourth division (11th year, 1st month, 7th day): Babylon strengthened against Egypt, 30:20–26.
5. Fifth division (11th year, 3d month, 1st day): Egypt's glory and downfall parallel Assyria's, 31:1–18.
6. Sixth division (12th year, 12th month, 1st day): lamentations for Egypt, 32:1–16.
7. Seventh division (12th year, 15th day): Egypt to take her place among other fallen nations, 32:17–32.
- III. Prophecies of Mercy Concerning Israel, 33:1 to 48:35.
 - A. First section, 33:1 to 39:29 (12th year, 10th month, 5th day).
 1. Ezekiel's commission renewed, 33:1–20.
 2. The arrival of news of the fall of Jerusalem, 33:21–33.
 3. The shepherds of Israel reproved, 34:1–31.
 4. A prophecy against Edom, 35:1–15.
 5. The mountains of Israel comforted, 36:1–38.
 - a. Desolated Israel to be rebuilt, 36:1–15.
 - b. A spiritual revival the basis of the new kingdom, 36:16–38.
 6. The vision of the dry bones, 37:1–28.
 7. Prophecies against Gog and Magog, 38:1 to 39:29.
 - B. Second section, 40:1 to 48:35 (25th year, in the beginning of the year, 10th day), visions of future restoration.
 1. Of the Temple, 40:1 to 43:27.
 2. The Temple ritual, 44:1 to 47:12.
 3. The distribution of the land, 47:13 to 48:35.

Chronological Table of the Prophecies of Ezekiel

Yr. of Jehoiachin's				Year B.C.		Chapters
Day	Month	Captivity	Julian Month	S–S	F–F	
		(1)		(597/96)	(597/96)	
5	4	5	July	593	592	1-7
5	6	6	September	592	591	8-19
10	5	7	August	591	590	20-23
10	10	9	January	588	588	24, 25?
12	10	10	January	587	587	29:1-16; 30:1-19?
1	----	11		587/86	587/86	26-28
7	1	11	April	587	586	30:20-26
1	3	11	June	587	586	31
5	10	12	January	585	585	33 (34-39?)
1	12	12	March	585	585	32:1-16
15	[12]	12	March	[585]	[585]	32:17-32
10	[1?]	25	April	573	Oct. 573? Apr. 572?	40-48

CHAPTER 1

1 *The time of Ezekiel's prophecy at Chebar. 4 His vision of four cherubims, 15 of the four wheels, 26 and of the glory of God.*

1. Thirtieth year. With the characteristic accuracy of a faithful historian, Ezekiel begins his prophetic dissertation with a careful dating of the events concerned. It was the 30th year. However, he does not specify the particular event that marks the beginning of this period. Many believe that he refers to the 30th year of his life. The age of 30 was significant from the point of view that at this age the Hebrew youth were considered to have reached maturity. This was the year in which the Levites originally began their Temple functions (Num. 4:3). It was in or about their 30th year that both our Lord and John the Baptist began their public ministry (see on Matt. 3:1).

Since this 30th year is equated with the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (see on Eze. 1:2), the 1st year of the 30 would be (according to two of the possible reckonings) a significant year, the 18th of Josiah; for it was then the book of the law was discovered in the Temple (2 Kings 22:3–8). This event marked the beginning of a reformation that, if successfully followed up, would have done much to alter the future history of Judah. It is possible that Ezekiel had this important incident in mind when he designated the 30th year.

Fourth month. Numbered from the spring month Nisan, regardless of whether the calendar year was reckoned from spring or fall (Vol. II, pp. 108–110, 116). The 4th month would begin in our June or July, 593 or 592 (see on v. 2).

Among the captives. That is, Ezekiel was in the midst of the region where the captives were settled. The vision came to him privately, and was later to be delivered publicly (ch. 3:1, 4).

Chebar. By most earlier commentators this river was identified with Habor, the modern *Nahr el-Khábûr* in northern Mesopotamia. The difficulty with this view was that this river was not "in the land of the Chaldeans" (v. 3). However, recent excavations carried out at Nippur, in Babylonia proper, have uncovered evidences of a settlement of Jews in the area in about the 7th to the 5th century B.C. Through this vicinity ran one of the great Babylonian canals known as *Nâru Kabari*, which is probably the river to which Ezekiel here refers.

Visions of God. These were not only visions given by God but manifestations of the divine glory to the prophetic eye. Such revelations are termed theophanies. They frequently accompany the call of a prophet. Thus, Isaiah trembled before the awful display of the throne high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1); Moses beheld the glory in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2); John the revelator saw one like the Son of man walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:13). What was the purpose of these visions of God? They may be regarded as grand introductions by which God ushers the prophet into a new realm of knowledge and insight, a new era of experience, a new phase of responsibility. In their capacity as prophets these messengers would be expected to speak with conviction concerning divine matters. No mere mental suppositions would do. They would have to speak of things actually seen. It was an advantage for them to be able to say with Isaiah, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

So impressed was Ezekiel with his vision of divine glory that he noted down the precise time. It was the 5th day of the 4th month of the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity

(v. 2). Christians do well to note down and oft recall special interventions of divine Providence and unusual revelations of the divine presence in their experience.

2. Fifth year. This date is easily synchronized with secular history, for the capture of Jehoiachin is the most precisely dated event in the Bible. Already placed in 597 B.C. by its synchronism with a year of Nebuchadnezzar (see on 2 Kings 24:12), whose reign is astronomically fixed (see Vol. II, p. 152), it is now known to have occurred on Adar 2 (see Vol. IV, pp. 505, 756), approximately March 16. Then came Jehoiachin's removal to Babylon, and the beginning of the period known as Jehoiachin's captivity (2 Kings 24:6–15). Obviously Ezekiel was in that unhappy company that was removed to Babylon at this time, for his system of dating, which is based on the years of the captivity of Jehoiachin (as indicated in the present verse), is twice equated with the years “of *our* captivity” (chs. 33:21; 40:1). The 5th year of Jehoiachin's exile would bring us to 593/592 B.C. for the year of the beginning of Ezekiel's visions. Whether the day of this vision was in the summer of 593 or the summer of 592 depends on whether Ezekiel counted the year of Jehoiachin's captivity from the spring (by the Babylonian calendar) or from the autumn (by the Jewish civil calendar). See p. 572 for the alternative dates of the visions.

3. Came expressly. Literally, “being, was.” The verb “to be” is duplicated, thereby becoming emphatic—the word “truly came” to him. Ezekiel recognized the uniqueness of his new experience. He knew that what had come to him was not some sudden flight of imagination, or some burst of spiritual enlightenment. The Lord was speaking directly to him in a manner now possible because of his new investment with the prophetic gift.

The priest. See p. 567.

Hand of the Lord. A figure of the divine power that rested upon him. The same expression is used concerning other prophets, for example, Elijah (1 Kings 18:46), Elisha (2 Kings 3:15). Compare the experience of Daniel (Dan. 8:18; 10:10), Isaiah (Isa. 8:11), and John (Rev. 1:17). Ezekiel knew that this strange, new power now impelling him was none other than the power of God.

4. I looked. Here begins a description of what passed before the prophet's astonished gaze. The vision concerning the four living creatures, the four wheels, the firmament, and the throne has been considered the most obscure of all the OT visions. It is true that certain features appear strikingly unusual, but this ought not to deter us from seeking an understanding of that which God has seen fit first to present and further to have recorded and preserved in His Sacred Word. Much can be understood, and perhaps nearly all, of what God intended to teach through this vision.

Out of the north. North was the direction from which the Assyrian and Chaldean conquerors were accustomed to descend upon Jerusalem (see on Jer. 1:14). It has been suggested that this may have been the reason why the whirlwind, which brought with it the cloud concealing the divine presence and the bow of promise, was presented as coming from that direction. Above the cruel monarchs of Assyria and Babylon the God of mercy and truth was enthroned (5T 752). Ezekiel was filled with gloomy forebodings over the desolations of his land, and needed reassurance.

A great cloud. Doubtless a symbol of the divine presence (see Ex. 19:9–16; Ps. 50:3).

Infolding itself. The clause may literally be translated, “and a fire taking hold of itself.” The form of the Hebrew verb here used suggests the fire gathering itself up in fresh outbursts of flame.

Amber. Heb. *chashmal*, a word occurring only here, in v. 27, and in ch. 8:2. The derivation is uncertain and any translation is merely conjectural. The RSV renders it “gleaming bronze.” The LXX reads, *elektron*, “electrum,” an alloy of silver and gold. This polished metal, glowing in the light of the revolving flames, added to the dazzling brightness and splendor of the scene.

5. Likeness. The prophet is shown beings he has never beheld before and with which his hearers and readers were unfamiliar. He must describe them in terms understood by men. His feelings of inadequacy are indicated by his frequent use of the term “likeness.” The word appears 10 times in ch. 1.

Of a man. With all the strange variety of details yet to be described, the chief impression was that the living creatures had a human form. They stood and moved upright like men.

6. Four faces. The four living creatures were identical in appearance. Each of them had four distinct faces, those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (v. 10). By contrast the four living creatures that John saw were not identical. They had each only one face, and the four faces were different (Rev. 4:7), the forms, however, corresponding to the faces of the living creatures Ezekiel saw.

Four wings. The living creatures of Rev. 4 had six wings. The seraphim of Isa. 6:2 had six wings.

7. Their feet. Or, “their legs.” The word translated “feet” at times designates the “legs” (see 1 Sam. 17:6). The structure was such as to make the creatures fitted equally for motion in all directions, without the necessity of turning, as the vision further indicates (see Eze. 1:17).

8. The hands of a man. See on ch. 10:8. If, as appears evident, the two scriptures represent the same figure, then the hands do not belong to the living creatures as a part of their bodies. They represent instead the hand of God placed underneath the wings for the purpose of guidance.

9. Joined. Compare v. 11.

Turned not. There was no necessity for turning, for since the faces looked in all directions, any direction was a forward movement. The feet being “straight” (see v. 7) made it equally easy to go in any way. We may imagine a formation like a square that never turned on its axis, but simply moved in the direction in which it was impelled.

10. Their faces. There was but one body to each of these creatures, but each body had four faces. The faces were on the four sides, so that each of the four creatures looked in all four directions at once.

Since the prophet does not interpret the symbols of his vision, and since the Scriptures elsewhere do not directly state the significance of these faces, we can only conjecture as to the specific application of the symbols. Commentators have suggested various ideas, such as: (1) The human face is the highest symbol of the Eternal; the lion, a symbol of sovereignty; the ox, also a king of sovereignty, together with a natural symbol of strength made subservient to human uses; and the eagle, an emblem of kingly power. (2) The faces are symbols of the four evangelists. This view was advanced by the Church Fathers, Irenaeus being one of the first to set forth the theory. The lion is sometimes identified with Matthew, and the man with Mark, and conversely. The ox and the eagle are uniformly assigned to Luke and John respectively. But this interpretation has only an imaginative foundation. (3) According to later Jewish tradition the four forms, taking

Ezekiel's order, are the standards generally borne by the tribes of Reuben, Judah, Ephraim, and Dan when they encamped in the wilderness (Num. 2:2). That such were the ancient standards cannot be verified. Even if such were possible, it is difficult to see any connection between the standards and the teaching objectives of the vision.

When an attempt is made to interpret these four living creatures, it is well to keep in mind that in symbolic prophecy the prophet sees representations of the actual and not the actual itself. These representations may be like the actual; often they are not. Frequently the actors in a prophetic drama have an appearance vastly different from the beings or movements they represent. Thus angels may act the parts later to be carried out by men. An angel acted the part of the advent people in a vision of the disappointment (Rev. 10:1–11; cf. Rev. 14:6–12). Caricatured beasts and dragons are used to dramatize the parts of nations and supernatural powers (see Dan. 7; 8; Rev. 12; 13; 17). In one instance Jesus is symbolically presented as a lamb with a bleeding knife wound, and with seven horns and seven eyes (Rev. 5:6). No one would conclude for a moment that this was an attempt to represent the appearance of Jesus. In a vision of the second advent Jesus is shown riding on a white horse, clothed in a garment dipped in blood, and having a sword in His mouth. Here again it is not the purpose of the vision to represent the actual appearance of Jesus at the time of the great climactic event of history (Rev. 19:11–15). Care must be exercised not to take a Bible prophet literally when literalness is not intended. On one occasion, when ridiculed by her critics, Ellen G. White wrote: "My opponents ridicule 'that weak and childish expression of glorious grapes *growing* on silver wires, and these wires attached to golden rods.' ... I do not state that grapes were growing on silver wires. That which I beheld is described as it appeared to me. It is not to be supposed that grapes were attached to silver wires or golden rods, but that such was the appearance presented" (EGW MS 4, 1883).

In the interpretation of symbolic prophecy it is important to permit the same Spirit that indited the vision to identify its symbols. Where such identification is lacking, the expositor is left to conjecture as to the application; hence dogmatism must be avoided. Further, as in parables, the various features of symbolic presentations have varying degrees of significance and importance. A parable must not be made to stand on all four feet. This is likewise true of symbolic prophecy. Equal importance must not be attached to every detail of a prophetic picture. Some features may be introduced merely to round out the presentation, or to provide a consistent background. As in the case of parables, we must learn what is the over-all objective of the vision, and what features of the pictorial presentation are intended to convey divine truth (see Vol. III, p. 1111; see also COL 244).

Inspiration has not left us in darkness as to the teaching objective of Ezekiel's vision of the living creatures (see PK 535, 536; 5T 751–754; Ed 177, 178). The statements here referred to set forth first the background of the vision. The prophetic presentation aimed to give courage to the Jews at a moment when much of their country lay in ruins through successive invasions and many of the inhabitants were captives in a foreign land. To these oppressed ones it appeared that God was no longer in control. The plundering of the heathen nations at will was interpreted by many as though God no longer cared. The people failed to see the hand of God in the course of history. They were unaware of the fact that a divine, overruling purpose was at work in the recent developments, as indeed it had been in all ages. The vision was given to show that an overruling Power had to do with the affairs of earthly rulers and that God was still in control. This was the over-all

objective of the vision. Thus any interpretation attempted must be consistent with this objective.

The living creatures represent heavenly beings (see 5T 751). As already noted, it is not necessary to imagine that in the service of God are four-headed, four-winged beings. Inspiration nowhere requires such a conclusion. The forms chosen for this prophetic presentation were doubtless designed to symbolize heavenly messengers in their plentitude of offices, capabilities, and adoptabilities.

12. *Whither the spirit.* There is no independent action on the part of these creatures. Their movements are in harmony with the directions of the Spirit. This is further emphasized in v. 20.

13. *Appearance of lamps.* A further reference to the fire mentioned in v. 4. Ezekiel is now able to observe at closer range. He attempts to describe in human language the interesting spectacle of vibrating lamps and emanating flashes that were continuously active among the creatures.

14. *Flash of lightning.* Thus the speed of these creatures is represented as they hasten to and return from their various missions. “The bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion” (5T 754). To men it oft appears that the divine purposes are long delayed. True there has been some delay, but “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). One day and soon, with ominous swiftness, bursting forth as an overwhelming surprise, the end will come, more quickly than men expect.

15. *One wheel upon the earth.* While still gazing at these four living creatures the prophet had another wonder portrayed before him. In all there were four wheels (see vs. 16, 19). These wheels touched the earth, whereas the cherubim had appeared in a cloud (vs. 4, 5).

16. *Colour of a beryl.* Literally, “the eye of Tarshish.” Some form of precious stone is designated, but the identification is uncertain. Some commentators suggest the topaz. The name Tarshish probably indicates the source of the stone. On the location of Tarshish see on Gen. 10:4.

In the middle. The unique construction and arrangement of the wheels presented an apparently confused picture; nevertheless the movements were in perfect harmony.

17. *Their four sides.* As in the case of the living creatures, there was no turning upon the axis, but motion was possible and carried out in all directions. There was, further, no change in the relative position of the living creatures and the wheels in motion.

18. *Rings.* That is, the rims of the wheels.

Full of eyes. This signifies that the vision was not dealing with mere physical forces, but with forces embodying intelligence.

19. *Went by them.* There is in vs. 19–21 somewhat of a repetition, but also a variety of expression. The description emphasizes the perfect coordination of the movements of the living creatures and the wheels. There is no independent operation, either on the part of the wheels or of the living creatures.

According to PK 535, 536 and 5T 751–754 the wheels, so complicated in their arrangement, represent human affairs and the events of history in all their play and counterplay. What to the unskilled observer appears to be hopeless confusion, the

outworking of chance, the result of human ambition and caprice, is here presented as a harmonious pattern wrought out and guided by an infinite hand toward predetermined ends. For comment on the hand of God in history see on Dan. 4:17.

22. Firmament. Heb. *raqia'*, literally, "an expanse" (see on Gen. 1:6; Ps. 19:1). The reference is to the expanse above the living creatures.

Crystal. Heb. *qerach*, literally, "ice." In all other occurrences the word is translated either "ice" or "frost" (Gen. 31:40; Job 6:16; 37:10; 38:29; Jer. 36:30). The picture is one of a gorgeous display, perhaps faintly resembled by the morning sun falling upon the eternal snows of some lofty mountain peak.

23. Their wings straight. The prophet is trying to represent each part of the vision in its proper relationship to the other parts. Two of the wings of each creature were straight, that is, outstretched toward the firmament above, not necessarily to support it as some have supposed. The other two wings were folded reverently over the bodies of the living creatures.

24. Noise. Heb. *qol*, a common word in the OT; also frequently translated "sound," or "voice." The context must determine which meaning best suits each particular instance. *Qol* occurs five times in this text alone, and is translated "noise" three times and "voice" twice. "Sound" instead of "noise" would be the preferable translation in the first occurrence of the word. The phrase would then read, "the sound of their wings." Such a translation of *qol* in Gen. 3:8 would give to that passage also a more meaningful translation. Instead of reading, "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking," we might read, "they heard the sound of the Lord God walking."

The sound of the wings in motion that Ezekiel hears, strikes him as different from the ordinary sounds he is accustomed to hear. He casts about for some simile to describe the melody that thrills his soul. He finds a partial parallel in the sound of great waters, perhaps a rushing stream or a tumbling cataract. But the simile is inadequate. The sound is complex. In addition to the voice of God, Ezekiel also detects the voice of a great host, as though a large number of beings are involved in the movements of the living creatures and the movements of the wheels.

25. From the firmament. Rather, "from above the firmament." This means that the voice comes from the throne, which, according to v. 26, was above the firmament. This voice is to be distinguished from the sound previously heard and described.

Let down their wings. Compare v. 24. The repetition of the idea seems to suggest a fresh act of reverence toward the Majesty above. When the voice was heard the cherubim stood still, the mighty sounds of their going were hushed, and their wings fell motionless in the attitude of reverential attention.

26. The likeness of a throne. Here is the grand climax of the vision. The greatest glory has been kept till the last. Above the crystalline firmament appears what first seemed to the prophet a concentration of the richest, deepest blue. The KJV has inverted the word order of this text. The Heb. reads, "like the appearance of a sapphire stone, even the likeness of a throne." The likeness to stone no doubt impressed itself first. Then as the detail became more distinct the prophet noticed the form of a throne.

The appearance of a man. In vision the prophet saw only a representation of the original (see on v. 10). Ezekiel did not see the Divine Being Himself, but rather a

representation of the Deity. In describing the Being as a man, the prophet employed extreme caution, using the combination of terms, “a likeness like the appearance of a human.” “No man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18), and so human beings are unable to give an accurate description of His actual essence. God reveals Himself to men in vision or actuality in various forms: to Abraham, Christ came as a wayfarer (Gen. 18:1); to Jacob, as an assailant (Gen. 32:24); to Joshua, as a warrior (Joshua 5:13). To John the revelator in vision He revealed Himself in various forms, including that of a lamb (Rev. 6:1; cf. Rev. 1:1–16; 14:1). His “visions of God” (see on Eze. 1:1) gave Ezekiel the needed assurance of the genuineness of his call and added the requisite authority to his message.

The God who rules in the heavens is not an absentee Lord. Ezekiel saw the firmament and the throne directly above the heads of the living creatures. These, in turn, were in position beside each of the wheels that, when at rest, touched the ground. What a comfort to know that He who sitteth above the cherubim is in control, that He guards His people still, and that every earthly power that seeks to exalt itself against the God of heaven will be subdued, and God will be all in all!

27. *Amber.* Heb. *chashmal*. By various repetitions the prophet attempts to describe the exceeding brightness and glory of the scene. Yet the display is but a dim replica of the original; for the Eternal Father dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1 Tim. 6:16).

28. *The bow.* Ezekiel was probably reminded of the gracious promise in Gen. 9:13. As discouraging and foreboding of disaster as the national outlook presented itself to the prophet, he knew that God’s thoughts toward His people were thoughts of peace and not of evil. Thus the majestic presentation of God’s glory was completed. Overpowered by the heavenly brilliance of the scene, Ezekiel fell on his face, but a voice bade him arise and hear the word of the Lord.

The rainbow encircling the throne of God is our assurance of His eternal love. “The throne arched with the rainbow of promise, [is] the righteousness of Christ. ... The rainbow encircling the throne represents the combined power of mercy and justice” (EGW RH Dec. 13, 1892). It is “a token of the mercy of God toward the repentant sinner” (PP 107).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–28Ed 177, 178; PK 535, 536; TM 213; 5T 751–754; 9T 259, 260

1 Ed 177; PK 448, 535; 5T 751

3–10FE 395

4, 5 Ed 177; PK 535; 5T 751

11 PP 348

13 5T 751

14 GC 512

15–21Ev 93; ML 39; 9T 259

16, 26 Ed 177; PK 535; 5T 751

28 PP 107; 5T 751

CHAPTER 2

1 *Ezekiel’s commission.* 6 *His instruction.* 9 *The roll of his heavy prophecy.*

1. Son of man. Heb. *ben-‘adam*. This is God’s customary form of address to Ezekiel. The form occurs 93 times throughout the book. Daniel is the only other prophet so named, but the title appears in his book but once. The Hebrew has several words for man: (1) *‘ish*, which refers to man as a male or husband; (2) *‘enosh*, which is a more general term, seldom used in the singular, more usually collective for the whole human race. It seems to comprehend man in his frailty, disease, and mortality. Jesus, who took upon Himself not the nature of angels, but of the human race after four thousand years of sin had left their stamp of degeneracy, is prophetically designated “Son of *‘enash*” (Dan. 7:13; *‘enash* is the Aramaic form of *‘enosh*); (3) *‘adam*, which describes man in a generic sense. God said, “Let us make *‘adam* in our image” (Gen. 1:26). Our English word “mankind” in many instances suitably translates *‘adam*; (4) *geber*, which describes man in his youthful vigor.

Ezekiel, addressed as “son of man” (*ben-‘adam*), is reminded of the fact that he is a member of the human race. It was through human channels that God purposed to convey His message of salvation to perishing souls. He could have employed other means. Angels might have been appointed His ambassadors. An audible voice from heaven might have been the evangel. But God desired to make man a sharer in the joys of unselfish ministry to others, and so He committed unto him the “word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). This task no “son of man” may shirk. Souls are either won or lost by the manner in which he relates himself to this responsibility. Thus, to be addressed as a “son of man” is a call to personal or public ministry in ardent passion for fellow creatures.

Stand upon thy feet. The vision of the glory of God had prostrated Ezekiel. In a similar manifestation of the power of God, Daniel declared, “There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan. 10:8). In the call to divine service these prophets were led first to feel their own weakness. Then divine power came and activated them, restoring to them physical strength and enabling them to receive the heavenly communication.

2. Entered into me. Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:28). The call to prophetic office is not by personal choice, but by divine appointment (see Num. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:28). The reception of the Holy Spirit, which imparts the prophetic ability, is the evidence of the genuine call. Any claim to the gift apart from this necessary prerequisite is false. When Ezekiel received his call, the Spirit entered into him, putting him into a condition that is called in prophetic language, “in the Spirit” (see Rev. 1:10; 4:2). While the prophet is “in the Spirit,” he may seem to take journeys to distant points, though in actuality he has not moved a step. Describing his vision of the third heaven, Paul admitted his inability to distinguish his vision from reality. “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth” (2 Cor. 12:2).

3. Children of Israel. Here begins the commission to Ezekiel. Basically, his message was to the exiles of Judah, however, in its wider scope it embraced the ten tribes who, more than 100 years before, had been carried into captivity by the Assyrians. Changing fortunes had given to Babylon and Media the territories of Assyria, so that when the Babylonian captivity swallowed up the remnant of Judah the 12 tribes were in a sense reunited, all now being under a foreign yoke (see Jer. 50:17, 18, 33).

A rebellious nation. Literally, “nations that are rebellious.” The word rendered “nation” is the one frequently translated “heathen.” So low had Israel sunk in her willful departure from God that she, who was to have been the royal nation, the kingdom of priests (see Ex. 19:6), is now addressed by the derogatory title “heathen,” and that with the additional epithet “rebellious.” The prophet is further reminded that Israel’s defection is of long standing.

4. Impudent. Literally, “hard of face,” meaning “obstinate,” “stubborn.” The term “stiffhearted” further emphasizes the stubbornness of nature. The Lord was painting a grim picture of Israel’s depravity. The picture was not overdrawn, as the prophet was soon to discover.

Thus saith the Lord God. The charge to Ezekiel is the divine commission to every teacher of the Word, to every expositor of sacred truth. God’s Word is not to be intermixed with human opinions. Private theories are fallible. Concerning divine matters, only those things that God has revealed can be definitely known as facts. All else is human opinion. With every wind of doctrine blowing and every species of interpretation abroad, men need the reassurance of a message backed by a “Thus saith the Lord God.” Such a declaration is the voice of authority. Ezekiel needed such a warrant. Judah’s doom was impending. His message came bearing the credentials from the highest authority.

5. Forbear. That is, neglect to heed. Compare the same formula in v. 7; ch. 3:11; cf. ch. 3:27. A failure to heed must not be attributed to an act of predestination. God’s plan of salvation embraces all: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11); God is “not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). All are given an adequate chance of salvation. Jesus is the light “which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). All possible influences consistent with free choice and the issues of the great controversy are brought to bear upon men to induce them to accept the proffered redemption. But it is for men to decide whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. The disobedient are without excuse. God will be able to say of every soul who is eventually lost: “What could have been done more ... that I have not done?” (Isa. 5:4). Thus men destroy themselves by their refusal to accept the salvation of Christ (see 5T 120). As a culminating event in the great controversy the history of the world will be portrayed in panoramic view revealing to each soul his relation to the issues of the great conflict. As a result, all will acknowledge the justice of God and the adequacy of the grace offered them (Rom. 14:10, 11; Rev. 15:3; cf. GC 666–671).

Yet shall know. The crowning evidence that the prophet bears divine credentials is the fulfillment of his word. Yet even while he is delivering his message the Holy Spirit testifies to hardened hearts that the message of the messenger of God is from heaven. To the rebellious captives the Holy Spirit would send conviction that their course of obstinate impiety was unjustified. They might openly mock the divine messenger, but beneath the sneer of scorn would be deep-seated fear that the voice they were spurning was indeed the voice of God. Ezekiel’s messages would be either a “savour of death unto death,” or of “life unto life” (2 Cor. 2:16).

6. Be not afraid. Ezekiel’s opposition would come from rulers, priests, and pretended prophets. They would ridicule, misrepresent, accuse, and threaten the prophet, but through it all he was to avoid giving way to their attempts to intimidate him and to the discouraging fears that beset him on every side.

Briers. Used metaphorically of the opposition the prophet would encounter from those to whom he was sent.

7. Whether they will hear. See on v. 5.

8. Be not thou rebellious. There was danger that with so forbidding a prospect, Ezekiel would shrink from his responsibility. In so shrinking he would identify himself with the very rebellion he was sent to reprove. There was danger that he would be influenced by his environment of prevailing apostasy and that he would lose his sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. There is a subtle poison in the atmosphere of evil society. It is difficult for a man to be faithful among the faithless, especially when the faithless profess the same hopes and aspirations as he. That is why the greatest danger to the church is from within, not without. If those who are called to be leaders are themselves “rebellious,” like the “rebellious house,” then what else can be expected but a widespread departure from God? The history of the apostasy of Israel reveals the baneful result of what happens when men look to men and trust in human leaders who themselves are practicing evil.

Eat that I give thee. This is symbolic prophecy, and the prophet ate the scroll in vision, not in fact (see on v. 2). The figure is full of spiritual meaning. In order to impart to his fellow men, the teacher must first receive from God. Second, as physical nourishment introduced into the body becomes flesh, blood, and bones, so the message must be appropriated and become a part of the messenger. The teacher cannot be fitted for service by a superficial and uncertain acquaintance with his message. The message must sink into the depths of his nature, must penetrate his being, must enter into all the functions of his spiritual life. It must become an integral part of his thought and life.

9. An hand was sent. The hand may have been that of the four living creatures. It represented the intermediate agencies by which God imparts revelations to His servants the prophets (see Rev. 1:1). The messages themselves originate with God; hence the prophet is able to declare with conviction, “This is the word of the Lord.”

10. Written within and without. Books were anciently written upon skins or papyri sewed together to form long strips that were then rolled up. Normally these rolls were written on one side only. The one that was handed to Ezekiel was written on both sides, doubtless to denote abundance of subject matter. The message was no evangel of peace such as the angels brought to the shepherds of Bethlehem when Christ our Saviour was born (Luke 2:13, 14). Their message was “good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10), but this was a prophecy of “lamentations, and mourning, and woe.” Yet the disclosure of the threatened calamity was the means God used to awaken sin-hardened hearts that He might heal them with the gospel balm. As Ezekiel’s work developed, it was often his privilege to temper his discourses of denunciation with appeals of proffered mercy.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–10TM 213

7 Ev 77; GC 459; TM 233; 5T 20, 74, 263, 691; 7T 35; 8T 61, 69; 9T 227

CHAPTER 3

1 *Ezekiel eateth the roll.* 4 *God encourageth him.* 15 *God sheweth him the rule of prophecy.* 22 *God shutteth and openeth the prophet’s mouth.*

1. Eat this roll. Perhaps a slight hesitation on the part of Ezekiel called for a repetition of the command (see ch. 2:8). But the lesson intended required dramatic illustration. It was not for the prophet to choose his own message. His meat must be to do

the will of Him who sent him and to proclaim His message (see John 4:34). Inspiration is more than the subjective purifying and stimulating of mental powers. There is an external, objective impartation of facts.

The lesson is also for the student of the Word. He must receive the Bible as sent to him. Men do not create divine truth. It is discovered from the Bible. The message must be personally appropriated, internally consumed. The truths must become a part of the life and character. This is the means by which men become in every sense new creatures.

3. As honey for sweetness. How thrilling was the realization to Ezekiel that he had been called to be a fellow worker with God, to be a mouthpiece for Jehovah in reproving the sins of his people! The call to prophetic office is indeed a high privilege. But the danger of self-exaltation is ever present. Paul feared it (2 Cor. 12:7). Compare the experience of Ellen G. White (LS 71, 72). Ezekiel's initial experience of sweetness was later turned to bitterness as he came face to face with the realities of the task. It is frequently thus with those called to special service. How soon the early thrill loses its potency when one is face to face with the stark realities of grim duty.

5. Of a strange speech. The implication is that outwardly his task would be easier than if sent to the heathen whose language he did not understand and to whom his tongue would be foreign. His commission was primarily to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (see Matt. 15:24), not that other nations were outside the pale of salvation, but that God's purpose was to make Israel the spiritual nucleus and evangelizing force. Through His chosen people He purposed to preserve among men a knowledge of His law and expand His spiritual kingdom. The prophets recognized this purpose. A considerable portion of Ezekiel's prophecies was devoted to an enumeration of judgments to be visited upon surrounding nations. These were in intent appeals to these countries, disclosing to them their subsequent history in the event they refused to accept God's plan (see Jer. 18:7, 8). See pp. 26–30.

6. Harkened. Even as did Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4:27), the Syrophenician woman (Matt. 15:21–28), or the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5–12). The mighty works such as were wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida would have been more than sufficient for the conversion of Tyre and Sidon, or Nineveh (Matt. 11:21; 12:41). But Israel was more hardened than the nations around her.

In all ages it has been God's purpose to save as many of the human family as possible. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Eze. 33:11). God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). The strong denunciations of the prophetic writers must be understood, as intended, to be forecasts of national calamities, never pronouncements of eternal doom upon all the individuals composing the nation. No matter how severe the prediction of national ruin, the individuals comprising the nation still had the opportunity of personal salvation. Thus it was that in Elijah's day there were left 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).

7. Unto me. Lest Ezekiel should become discouraged by the refusal of the people to listen to his words, the Lord reminded him that they had already refused to listen to Him. "The servant is not greater than his lord" (John 13:16). The servant must not expect better treatment than his Master. The worker for souls feels keenly the refusal of men. Let him remember the more poignant disappointment of his Master, who is actually the one refused in the person of His servant. True, the servant may examine his effort to see

whether through some deficiency in presentation mercy was refused. But many refused the Lord of glory Himself, and should His servants feel that they are superior to their Master?

All the house of Israel. This expression should be interpreted to mean, “all the Israelites generally,” for there were at this time saints like Jeremiah and Daniel, and no doubt many others who, as individuals, were maintaining their integrity before God.

8. Strong. The root of the word for “strong” is the root also of the first half of Ezekiel’s name (see p. 567) and is probably used with reference to it. The prophet may have pleaded his own weakness in contrast with the obduracy of hardened sinners. Here is the promise that, hard as the Israelites might be, the prophet would be made harder than they and would prevail against them. This promise does not imply any coercion to secure acceptance of that message. Under God’s government acceptance is always a voluntary act.

9. Adamant. Heb. *shamir*, “a stone of great hardness.” Some authorities think emery is meant. *Shamir* is translated “diamond” in Jer. 17:1. However, the diamond was unknown at that time.

10. All my words. There must be no refusal to receive and to declare the whole counsel of God (see v. 11).

In thine heart. These words explain the visionary eating of v. 1. The apparent inversion of the process of reception in the latter part of this verse, first the heart, and later the ears, is an illustration of a kind of transposition not uncommon in the Hebrew.

11. Of the captivity. Earlier (v. 4; cf. ch. 2:3) Ezekiel had been told that his mission was to the house of Israel. Now the commission is specialized “to them of the captivity.” At the time of the call, 593/592 B.C. (see on ch. 1:2), and for several years afterward, the captives comprised but a small part of the Jewish nation. After the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. the captives represented the mass of the people. Ezekiel’s message was to the captivity, Jeremiah’s was to the remnant of Judah, and Daniel’s to the court of Babylon, except for that portion of his book which was sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12:4; GC 356). Thus, though the three men were contemporaries, there was a division of their spheres of responsibility. See p. 569.

12. Took me up. The initial phase of the prophet’s consecration to prophetic office now ends. In spirit Ezekiel is removed from the scene of the throne, the living creatures, and the wheels. As he departs he hears behind him the sound of a great “rushing” (LXX, “earthquake”). The sound is intelligible. It is an ascription of praise. There is no definite mention of the source, but perhaps, as in Isa. 6 and Rev. 4, the praise originates from the beings surrounding the throne.

The RSV translation, “and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place,” is obtained by changing the Heb. *baruk*, “blessed,” to *berum*, literally, “while rising.” The change is without support from the ancient versions.

14. Heat. Heb. *chemah*, frequently translated “wrath” (Num. 25:11; etc.); or “fury” (Gen. 27:44; etc.); three times rendered “hot displeasure” (Deut. 9:19; Ps. 6:1; 38:1). The call of God, which had been so sweet to Ezekiel (Eze. 3:3), is now at its performance turned to bitterness. Ezekiel’s anger may have been partly over the sins of his people; but beyond that, the disclosure of the hopelessness and difficulty of the task, the dread of failure, and, perhaps, the consciousness of unfitness doubtless added to overwhelm the

prophet with discouragement. Compare a similar experience in the life of Jeremiah (Jer. 20:8, 9; cf. Jer. 9:2).

15. *Tel-abib.* Heb. *Tel 'abib*, “mound of green ears of corn,” but the name is believed to represent the Akkadian *Til abūbi*, “mound of the storm flood.” Such sand mounds, produced by the action of wind and water, are reported common in the vicinity of Nippur (see on ch. 1:1) and are popularly believed to be relics of the Flood. However, Tel-abib cannot be definitely located.

Seven days. Some have compared this seven-day period of silence to a time of retirement in the experiences of other great religious leaders; for example, to Elijah’s 40 days in Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:4–8); Paul’s retreat to Arabia (Gal. 1:17); and our Lord’s withdrawal into the wilderness after His baptism. Others suggest that Ezekiel’s conduct was the result of his surprise at the conditions he encountered or the attitudes he met. Still others compare Ezekiel’s silence to the conduct of Job’s friends who sat with the patriarch on the ground for “seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word” (Job 2:13). However, the context seems to suggest that God intended no such delay. The muteness may instead have been caused by Ezekiel’s bitterness and heat of spirit. The prophet’s conduct was probably one of deliberate postponement if not of settled refusal. The mercy of God waited seven days. When at the end of that period there was no response by Ezekiel, the word of the Lord came to him in solemn warning. We are reminded of a similar reluctance on the part of Ellen G. White to make known to others what the Lord had revealed to her (1T 62–64).

17. *A watchman.* The figure is that of a military sentinel on the lookout tower whose work it is to warn men of approaching dangers (see 2 Sam. 18:24–27; 2 Kings 9:17–20). The word describes the special characteristic of Ezekiel’s work. The prophet was to watch personally for souls.

18. *Givest him not warning.* When the watchman saw the danger coming, he was to blow the trumpet. When Ezekiel saw the wicked going heedlessly on to perdition, he was to speak to them, warning them of the sure results of their course. These words may be taken in their wider application to refer, not merely to physical danger and death, but to spiritual danger that might bring a verdict of eternal death before the judgment bar of God. The decisions of that court mean either eternal life or eternal death for every soul that has ever lived. Annihilation is the ultimate fate of all who persist in transgression. The watchman is charged with the responsibility of warning men of this inevitable doom. His failure may result in the loss of souls.

The question is often raised, “Is it fair for God to permit the salvation of a soul to be dependent upon whether another individual discharges his responsibility of warning or not?” The answer is that God is fair, but that sin is exceedingly unfair. God works for the salvation of men in a manner consistent with His character and with reference to the issues of the great controversy. He does not use coercion. This places a limit on what He can do directly for the salvation of a soul. Yet when others cooperate with God in His effort to save that soul, immediately there is an increase of influences now operating upon the individual, and a greater likelihood that he will accept the divine plan for him. This consideration lies at the basis of foreign mission endeavor. Let us consider an island untouched by Christian influence. God, who through Jesus “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9), is doing all He can to save its every inhabitant. Any greater effort would be charged by the adversary as coercion. However, with the arrival

of the missionary the opportunities become much greater. As a result many more are saved. Thus the charge of unfairness, instead of being directed at God, must be directed at us. It is we who have been unfaithful watchmen, and our own souls will be lost unless genuine repentance removes the guilt.

19. *Delivered thy soul.* The responsibility of the watchman ends when the warning has been adequately given. However, the watchman may well inquire, "Was the warning given with the greatest effectiveness possible and was it extended for a sufficient length of time?"

Those who are warned are left free to choose whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Every soul who is lost will be in such a state through his own choice. No blame can rest upon God, who has provided adequate opportunity to all.

Men live or die according to their own personal choice. Ezekiel is emphasizing personal responsibility rather than national. The individual Israelites were not to regard themselves as lost because their nation was suffering punishment. On the other hand, they were not to assume that repentance would be unnecessary for them individually because they had Abraham as their father (Matt. 3:9).

20. *Stumbling block.* The purpose of the stumbling block is to arrest the sinner in his downward course and to arouse him to a sense of his danger. When sinners are thus interrupted, the voice of the watchman is needed. A warning at the appropriate moment may cause them to turn from their evil course. Failure to utter the warning may result in their rushing headlong to destruction; hence their blood will be required at the watchman's hand. Again it is seen how largely God depends upon the cooperation of human beings in His work of salvation (see on v. 18).

And his righteousness. Literally, "and his righteousness," that is, righteous acts. There is no support here for the widespread belief that the man who is really and truly righteous cannot fall away so as to be eventually lost. Only those who endure unto the end shall be saved (Matt. 24:13).

Not be remembered. In the plan of God rewards are not calculated on the basis of righteous deeds minus sins, or vice versa. In the case of the righteous man who endures unto the end, the entire record of guilt is blotted out and his reward is determined on the basis of his good deeds; the sinner, on the other hand, finds that none of his righteous deeds are taken into account, when his punishment is assigned (see ch. 18). This explains why, when sins are forgiven, there is not an immediate blotting out. A record is retained until the time of judgment, for if the righteous man should fall and be lost, all his iniquities, whether or not at any time forgiven, are taken into account in calculating his final reward (see COL 251).

22. *Hand of the Lord.* What Ezekiel had heard evidently filled him with an overwhelming and crushing sense of his responsibility.

23. *Glory of the Lord.* The impressive vision that Ezekiel had seen (ch. 1) returned to him. The grand display of God's glory that had inspired him to accept his mission, now doubtless filled him with renewed assurance. He accepted the rebuke for his silence. Henceforth Ezekiel appeared as a humble and obedient servant.

24. *Shut thyself.* Probably that he might have time for meditation preparatory to entering upon his work.

25. *Bands.* Possibly not actual imprisonment; at least there is no record of it in any part of the book. If figurative bands are meant, they may refer to the stubborn refusal of

the people to hear, making it practically impossible for Ezekiel to declare his prophecies. He would thus be as if he were bound.

26. *Thy tongue cleave.* As with Zacharias (Luke 1:22), who disbelieved the words of the angel, there seems to be a rebuke here of Ezekiel's refusal to speak when bidden. Yet the Lord used the experience for good. The dumbness of the prophet and the ability to speak only when the Lord opened his mouth was a further sign to that rebellious house that the words were indeed the words of the Lord.

27. *Let him hear.* Compare the words of Jesus in Matt. 11:15 and 13:9. The LXX translates the second phrase "Let him who is disobedient be disobedient," which finds an echo in Rev. 22:11.

A rebellious house. In earlier times God had referred to Israel as a "stiffnecked people" (Ex. 32:9). The same spirit that led to the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness had now made the Captivity inescapable.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-27TM 214

7 GC 459

17 CT 165; GW 207; RC 55; 1T 469; 2T 708; 5T 234; 8T 304

17-191T 313

18 6T 286

19 2T 53

21 1T 313

CHAPTER 4

1 *Under the type of a siege is shewed the time from the defection of Jeroboam to the captivity.* 9 *By the provision of the siege, is shewed the hardness of the famine.*

1. *Take thee.* It has been a moot point with students of prophecy as to whether the strange events in this chapter were visible and outward acts or merely vivid presentations seen by the prophet in vision, later to be spoken to the people. Among the reasons listed for believing that these events were enacted visibly in the sight of the people are the following: (1) they were to be for a sign to the house of Israel (v. 3); (2) there were similar incidents in the experiences of other prophets when the acts were evidently external—Zedekiah's horns of iron (1 Kings 22:11); Isaiah's walking "naked and barefoot" for three years (see on Isa. 20:3); Jeremiah's yokes of wood (Jer. 27:2); and Hosea's marriage to the harlot (Hosea 1:3). Ezekiel's carrying out his belongings in the sight of the people and digging through the wall (Eze. 12:2-7) is plainly a visible enactment presaging the coming siege. Such graphic presentations doubtless were intended to arrest attention, for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can. Similar pictorial devices are still used today in the practice of the sacraments. The object is to impress divine truths more vividly.

Tile. Or, "brick," as the Heb. *lebenah* is translated elsewhere (Gen. 11:3; Ex. 1:14; etc.). Bricks were anciently used for inscriptions, and many such specimens have been discovered.

2. *Lay siege.* The captives hoped that Jerusalem had suffered her last siege. Encouraged by false prophets, they expected soon to return to their native land. If they received Ezekiel's prediction of another siege, that would dash their fond hopes. Nevertheless, the doom upon their beloved city was inevitable. The impending judgments

were portrayed before the people in significant emblems that spoke with greater force and efficacy than words.

Fort. Heb. *dayeq*, a collective noun designating siegeworks, probably here of the type to overtop the walls of the besieged place, and thus to give opportunity for the besiegers to reach the defenders with their arrows as well as to provide an observation post.

Mount. This was an artificially made hill to enable the besiegers to mount the walls.

Battering rams. These were heavy beams with iron heads suspended horizontally by ropes from towers or movable frames. These beams were violently driven against the walls. Such machines appear frequently in Assyrian bas-reliefs, and seem to have been in common use at that time.

3. An iron pan. Heb. *machabath*, a sort of flat plate, a common cooking utensil in the East (see Lev. 2:5). The griddle may have formed part of the furnishings of the prophet's own house. It was used to represent a shield or defense wall set up by the enemy, from behind which they discharged their missiles. The iron probably symbolized the invulnerability of the enemies' lines.

A sign. The fact that these dramatic enactments were to constitute a "sign" lends strong support to the view that this chapter speaks of literal events (see on v. 1). For the word "sign" see on Isa. 7:14.

4. Left side. The posture is probably with reference to the fact that Samaria lay to the north of Jerusalem, that is, to the left as a man faced east. It is not necessary to infer that Ezekiel lay continuously 24 hours a day, during the long period here specified. Probably only a certain portion of the day was devoted to this form of symbolic preaching.

House of Israel. Here used in its restricted sense applying to the ten tribes.

Bear their iniquity. There is a difference of opinion as to whether Ezekiel was called upon to symbolize the sin of Israel or its punishment. Possibly both ideas were involved. Like the other ancient prophets Ezekiel was to mitigate his messages of doom with offers of the gospel balm. Nevertheless sin could not be overlooked. It needed to be atoned for. Ezekiel's act of bearing the iniquity of Israel may have been indicative of the fact that God was willing to forgive the people's sin, and even now, belatedly, accomplish His purpose through them.

5. Three hundred and ninety days. Many interpretations of this time period have been set forth. There are those who prefer the reading of the LXX, which assigns 150 days for bearing the iniquities of Israel and 40 days for those of Judah, and totals the two to make 190 days. This view is not without difficulty, for the 150 days do not represent the years of the captivity of the ten tribes, who were led captive in 723/722 B.C.

If we accept the figure of the Hebrew Bible, we must consider the 390 years to represent the period of Israel's defection. The period began with the secession of Jeroboam and the ten tribes from Judah. This secession marked the beginning of Israel's sin. Having withdrawn from the divinely appointed monarchy, the northern kingdom suffered under a long line of evil rulers; not one of their kings was a God-fearing man. But here again we are confronted with difficulty. According to the chronology of the kings adopted for this commentary (see Vol. II, pp. 140–144), the secession of the ten tribes occurred in 931 B.C. (see Vol. II, p. 77). From here to Ezekiel's vision in 593/592 was only about 339 years, to the fall of Jerusalem only 345 years, and to the return from captivity, 395 years. By the now obsolete method of reconciling the Judah-Israel

synchronisms by assuming interregnums, 390 years to Ezekiel were formerly calculated from an earlier date for the secession of the ten tribes.

However, the specifications of the symbolic period are not precisely enough stated to use this synchronism as a basis for chronology.

6. *Forty days.* By the same analogy as discussed under v. 5 the 40 years would represent the years of Judah's sin. In contrast with Israel, Judah remained faithful to her appointed rulers of the house of David. Yet more and more the inhabitants of Judah, too, had become steeped in idolatry, and though there were several devout kings in the kingdom of Judah who sought to stem the rising tide of evil, the course of the nation was progressively downward. One of the last major opportunities for reform came under King Josiah, who, in the 8th year of his reign (2 Chron. 34:3), "began to seek after the God of David his father." It was a noble attempt, but as far as the people were concerned, it was only a superficial work. They were later told that they had gone too far to turn back the threatened judgments (2 Chron. 34:23–25). If we regard Josiah's 8th year, 633/632 B.C. as the beginning of Judah's period of special guilt, then from that date to the first message to Ezekiel in 593/592 B.C. (see on Eze. 4:5) there are exactly 40 years.

Among other attempts to apply these time periods may be mentioned that which adds 390 and 40 to yield 430 days, which is then compared with Ex. 12:40, where 430 years is given as the years of the sojourning of the children of Israel. But such a similarity seems to be entirely without point. An entirely fanciful variation connects the 390 days with the 40 stripes of Deut. 25:3, reduced by Jewish teachers to "forty stripes save one" (2 Cor. 11:24). Thus 39 were assigned to each of the 10 tribes, leaving 40 for Judah by itself.

Each day for a year. Literally, "a day for the year, a day for the year." This expression may be compared with a similar statement in Num. 14:34, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." In these statements are found the first intimations of the prophetic scale which later was to figure so largely in the interpretation of the great time prophecies, such as the "time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25), and the "two thousand and three hundred days" (Dan. 8:14).

7. *Set thy face.* An expression denoting steadfastness and fixedness of purpose (see Lev. 17:10; 20:3, 5, 6; 26:17; Eze. 15:7; 20:46). The steadfastness of purpose was to be "toward the siege of Jerusalem." This was to be done during the periods the prophet lay on each side, figuratively bearing the iniquity of both Israel and Judah. The combination of these acts may be best understood in the light of God's purposes at this time as revealed through Jeremiah. By means of various types and symbols, as well as plain prophetic utterances, God declared to the remnant left in Judah that their only hope of safety lay in yielding to the king of Babylon. They had gone too far in their iniquity to avert the doom upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants. They must bear their iniquity. Captivity would be their lot. This was directly opposite to the proud ambitions of the militarists. Supported by false prophets, they defiantly rejected Jeremiah's appeal, and pursued their plans for resistance. Jeremiah himself was branded as a fifth columnist and a traitor. Ezekiel's fellow captives shared the same hope. Instead of patiently accepting God's plan of bearing their iniquity and getting at the root of all their trouble—their unsubdued hearts—they fondly hoped for the continuance of their beloved city and for their own speedy return to their native country.

Uncovered. A symbol of readiness for action.

8. Lay bands. The nature of these bands is not disclosed, but the symbolism is apparent. The restraint symbolized the unrelenting character of the predicted events. Nothing that the people could do, no matter how diligently pursued, would be able to ward off the devastation of Jerusalem and the captivity of the remnant.

9. Wheat. The order in which the foodstuffs are listed doubtless indicates the scarcity of food in the straitness of the siege. The wheat and the barley would not be in sufficient supply to outlast the siege and would need to be mixed with the coarser foodstuffs.

Beans. See 2 Sam. 17:28.

Lentiles. See Gen. 25:29, 34; 2 Sam. 17:28.

Millet. Heb. *dochan*, a word occurring only here, and accurately translated “millet.”

Fitches. Heb. *kussemim*, the modern spelt, *Triticum sativum*. The bread containing a mixture of spelt would be of a rather unpalatable variety.

10. Meat. Heb. *máakal*, “food [in general].” This is what “meat” meant in the English of the time of the KJV.

Twenty shekels. Eight oz. avoirdupois, or 227 g. (see Vol. I, p. 164), a rather scant ration, scarcely enough to sustain life.

11. Sixth part of an hin. A hin contained about 3.8 qt., or 4 liters (see Vol. I, p. 167). A sixth part would be about 11/3 pt. The meager allotment of food and water on which Ezekiel was to subsist has been described as too much for dying, too little for living.

12. With dung. In the straitness of the siege there would be no wood left for fuel, and as the siege continued, even animal dung would all be consumed. Thus men would be forced to use, for fuel, the dried contents of the “draughthouses,” or latrines, of Jerusalem.

13. Defiled bread. The meaning is probably that in captivity it would be impossible for the Jews to observe all the Mosaic precepts that were concerned with diet.

14. Ah Lord God! Ezekiel protests the divine command. Like Peter (Acts 10:14), he declares that he has been a scrupulous observer of the law. He is heard and the command is mitigated. He is permitted to use what was a common fuel for cooking in that part of the world.

16. Staff of bread. See Eze. 5:16; 14:13; cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16. The application of the prophetic enactment is now shown. Here the famine conditions so vividly enacted by Ezekiel are applied to Jerusalem.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 DA 233; GC 324; PK 698

CHAPTER 5

1 *Under the type of hair, 5 is shewed the judgment of Jerusalem for their rebellion, 12 by famine, sword, and dispersion.*

1. Barber's razor. The passage reads literally, “take to thee a sharp sword, a razor of barbers thou shalt take it to thee.” Obviously the idea is that the prophet is to take a sword because of its symbolism, and to use it as a razor. On the figure of the razor see Isa. 7:20, where the instrument is used as a symbol of the devastation wrought by an invading army.

Note that ch. 5 continues the prophetic narrative begun in ch. 4:1, without interruption.

Upon thine head. Ezekiel is instructed to perform a forbidden act as a symbolic representation. It was unlawful for the priest to shave either his head or his beard (Lev. 21:5). This time Ezekiel makes no protest (see Eze. 4:14). He knows when it is legitimate for him to request a modification or a reversal of a divine command and when to render unquestioning obedience.

Balances. Possibly representing the fairness and carefulness with which God deals with every soul. So carefully will every soul be weighed, and the rewards be assigned, that when at the end of the age the judgments of God are revealed, not a single voice of dissent will be heard in all the vast creation. From the least to the greatest all will be forced to confess, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:3; see GC 669).

2. Midst of the city. That is, in the midst of the portrayal that Ezekiel had made (ch. 4:1). The third part that was burned symbolized those in the city who would perish of pestilence and famine (ch. 5:12). The third part to be smitten with a knife (better, “sword”), “about it,” that is, round about the city, represents those who would fall by the sword in their attempts to escape, as, for example, Zedekiah’s sons and the rest of the king’s retinue (Jer. 52:10). The third which is scattered signifies the small part of the people who, escaping destruction, would be scattered among the heathen. Even there the sword was to follow them (see Eze. 5:12).

3. In thy skirts. This symbolizes the limited protection that the remnant who remained in the land under Gedaliah were to receive (see 2 Kings 25:22; Jer. 40:5, 6).

4. Midst of the fire. Many of the remnant that were left were to perish by violence, which was tragically fulfilled in the conspiracy of Ishmael against Gedaliah and the calamities that followed in its wake (Jer. 40; 41). This was the occasion for many going down into Egypt, where they were consumed according to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 42:13–17). Those who remained in the land suffered a further removal by Nebuzar-adan (Jer. 52:30), so that the ultimate result was the entire emptying of the land.

5. Midst of the nations. Here is set forth the strategic position of Jerusalem, situated as it was in the midst of the nations of the Near East and at the crossroads of ancient travel. Its unique location constituted one of the great opportunities for Israel. To the south lay Egypt; to the northeast Assyria and Babylon, and to the north the Syrians. On the coast were the Philistines, and farther north the Phoenicians. Nearby to the east were the Moabites and Ammonites, and to the south the Edomites.

God placed His people in the “midst of the nations” and purposed that they should constitute a great evangelizing force through which a knowledge of the true God was to spread to the whole world. It was His desire that the nation of Israel be a clear demonstration of the superiority of true religion over all false systems of worship. The experience and prosperity of Israel were to be exhibited as so attractive that all nations would seek after the God of Israel (see pp. 26–30).

The lesson is for us. As individual Christians, God has placed us as a light to our neighbors. He expects of us also a demonstration of the vast superiority and advantages of Christianity. He desires us to make our religion so attractive that others will seek after it.

6. Changed my judgments into wickedness. Better, “she hath rebelliously resisted my judgments.” Rebellion is a willful act, premeditated and planned.

More than the nations. This must be understood in the sense that the Israelites had sinned against greater light. God judges men on the basis of the light and opportunities they have had or might have had if they had sought after them. Those who constitute the church of God in the present age have the accumulated light of the ages concentrated upon them. God expects a higher standard of them than of men in any previous age. If they refuse and rebelliously resist as did Israel, their guilt will be proportionately greater.

7. Multiplied. The Hebrew verb is of uncertain meaning. According to some authorities, the clause may be rendered, "Because ye were in agitation [against God] more than the nations that are round about you."

Neither have done. A number of Hebrew manuscripts omit the negative. The meaning is thus made entirely clear. If the negative is retained, this part of the text may be understood to mean that Israel had not done as the other nations, for they, at least, were true to the gods they worshiped, whereas Israel rebelled against her God.

9. I have not done. It is not clear with what the impending calamities were to be compared, whether perhaps to the great catastrophes of the past, the Flood or the destruction of Sodom. It is true that neither of these represented so lingering a death as the one forecast in v. 10. What seems clear is that Israel had received higher opportunities and privileges than those entrusted to other nations. Consequently the punishment for their sin would be proportionately more severe and more conspicuous than that which God had inflicted or would inflict on any other nation.

10. Eat the sons. Moses, and later Jeremiah, had threatened this terrible judgment (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53; Jer. 19:9). The prediction met a grim fulfillment in the Syrian siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:28, 29), in the Chaldean siege of Jerusalem (Lam. 4:10), and in the final siege of the city by the Romans (Josephus *Wars* vi. 3. 4). Moses had also threatened the scattering "into all the winds" (Deut. 28:64).

11. As I live. A solemn oath occurring 14 times in Ezekiel.

Defiled my sanctuary. The defiling is more fully described in ch. 8.

Diminish. A number of Hebrew manuscripts and several ancient versions read "cut off," "break to pieces."

12. A third part of thee. An explanation of the symbolical actions of the earlier part of this chapter now begins. The fire (v. 2) signifies famine and pestilence.

13. I will be comforted. Heb. *nacham*. The original meaning has been generally understood to be, "to draw the breath forcibly," "to pant," "to sigh," "to groan." The corresponding Arabic word signifies "to breathe pantingly." It is difficult for us to conceive of God's taking comfort in the execution of such fearful judgments. Ezekiel himself later declared, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (ch. 33:11). Isaiah speaks of the act of destruction as a "strange act" (Isa. 28:21). Hosea thus represents the heart of God in the face of necessary judgment: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hosea 11:8). In the light of these considerations it seems more natural to think of *nacham* as signifying the sigh of grief or relief at the completion of necessary punishment, that such should have been the outcome of a program planned so differently.

14. Waste. Compare Lev. 26:31.

15. Instruction. Or, “warning.” Jerusalem was to have been the great object lesson in God’s education of mankind (see pp. 27–30). Her strategic position brought her to the attention of many nations. Now her calamity, with its accompanying unfavorable reflection on the true character of her religion, was also widely known.

16. Famine. Verses 16, 17 recapitulate Jerusalem’s sorrows. God’s judgments are elsewhere represented as arrows (Deut. 32:23; Ps. 7:13; 64:7). Evil beasts were a judgment threatened against the Jews, along with other desolating forces (Lev. 26:22; Deut. 32:24). Wild animals, such as lions and bears, multiplied in the land when it was uninhabited (see 2 Kings 17:25). “Blood” doubtless denotes a violent death.

CHAPTER 6

1 *The judgment of Israel for their idolatry.* 8 *A remnant shall be blessed.* 11 *The faithful are exhorted to lament their calamities.*

1. The word of the Lord. This phrase indicates a new revelation following, doubtless, an interval of silence between this and the previous revelation. However, the prophecy is closely connected with the explanation of the symbolism of ch. 5. The interval cannot have been long; ch. 8 is dated in the 6th month of the 6th year, a little more than a year since the beginning of Ezekiel’s visions. The clause, “And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,” seems to introduce each new revelation from God.

2. Set thy face. One of Ezekiel’s characteristic phrases (see chs. 13:17; 20:46; 21:2, 16; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2).

Toward the mountains. A poetic figure for the people inhabiting those mountains (see Eze. 36:1; Micah 6:2). Contrasted with the widespread plains in which Ezekiel found himself, Judea was a mountainous country. Furthermore, the mountains were centers of idolatrous worship (see Deut. 12:2; 2 Kings 17:10, 11; Jer. 2:20; 3:6, 23; Hosea 4:13).

3. To the rivers. The rivers and valleys are singled out, possibly because these, too, were scenes of abominable idolatry such as the sacrificing of children to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom (see Isa. 57:5; Jer. 7:31).

High places. Heb. *bamoth*. These were open-air sanctuaries at which the people offered sacrifices to Jehovah (see on 1 Kings 3:2). However, because the Canaanites had used the *bamoth* as centers of gross idolatry, worship at these places tended to degrade the religion of Jehovah. After the establishment of the Temple in Jerusalem the city became the one legitimate center for the worship of Jehovah. As idolatry spread, these high places became the centers for the most degrading heathen rites. Pious kings like Hezekiah and Josiah sought to put them down (2 Chron. 31:1; 2 Chron. 34:3, 4), but idolatrous successors restored them.

4. Your images. Heb. *chammanim*, from the root *chamam*, “to be warm.” From the same root comes *chammah*, sometimes used poetically for the sun itself (S. of Sol. 6:10; Isa. 30:26). From this some have surmised that the *chammanim* were connected with the worship of the sun. This cannot be established. We now know that *chammanim* were incense altars (see on 2 Chron. 14:5). The *chammanim* formed a part of the paraphernalia of the complicated system of idol worship that is here doomed to utter destruction. The verse is an echo of Lev. 26:30, where Moses pronounces the same judgments against the Jews for their evil deeds.

Idols. Heb. *gillulim*, perhaps from the root *galal*, “to roll,” hence an object that could be rolled, for example, a log. Some suggest a connection with *gel*, “dung” (Job 20:7; Eze. 4:12, 15), hence an object of contempt. *Gillulim* occurs 39 times in Ezekiel, and elsewhere throughout the OT only 9 times. Ironically these idols would be worshiped no longer by the living, but by the prostrate bodies of their dead worshipers.

6. Abolished. Heb. *machah*, a stronger word than “abolished.” It means “utterly obliterated,” “wiped out,” “exterminated.” The Israelites should have “exterminated” the idolatrous shrines of the Canaanites and so have effectively removed them as a source of temptation. Because of their failure to heed the divine command their own works would be obliterated.

7. Ye shall know. Instead of acknowledging God and heeding His revelations, the people “mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. 36:16). They refused to acknowledge the genuineness of the divine message until rudely awakened by the doom threatened by these despised prophets. The fulfillment of prophecy constituted the divine seal upon the validity of the prophet and his work.

In their idolatry the Israelites had compared Jehovah with the gods of the heathen and had regarded Him as only one of the many deities to be worshiped. Their choice of gods had been on the basis of who they thought would bring them the greatest prosperity (see 2 Chron. 28:23). In combating this demoralizing philosophy the prophets had set forth two main lines of evidence to prove the superiority of the true God over those who were gods only in name: first, Jehovah’s creative power, and second, His prophetic ability (Isa. 45; Jer. 10). This latter evidence is here presented as the one that would eventually force from the lips of the stubborn Israelites the confession that Jehovah was, after all, the true and only God. How the heart of God had hoped that such an acknowledgment would come while there was yet remedy! How loath God was to permit His chosen ones to reap the fruits of their own stubborn unbelief!

Prophecy and its fulfillment are elsewhere set forth as a reason for belief: “And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (John 14:29). This constitutes, perhaps, the most powerful evidence that the Scriptures are divine, and that God is what He has declared Himself to be. Prophecy is the argument against which the skeptic has found no logical rebuttal. In our day there is an accumulation of prophetic evidence. Those who refuse to acknowledge its validity and thus the claims of the God who uttered it, will finally, like Israel of old, be forced to acknowledge the sovereignty of the only true and living God.

The expression “ye shall know” or its equivalent occurs 88 times in Ezekiel, and is the keynote of the book. It was because Israel did not “know” that they were carried into captivity (Isa. 1:3; 5:13; Hosea 4:6). The Captivity was an educational process. Through sore adversity, God’s people were to learn what they had failed to learn during times of prosperity (DA 28; see Vol. IV, p. 31).

8. A remnant. A gleam of hope in the prophecy of gloom, as frequently appears in the prophetic messages. Some would be moved by the hard conditions and acknowledge that they had done wickedly, and in a measure turn to their God. Through this remnant, God would seek to fulfill His promises.

The idea of a remnant is based upon the fact that salvation is an individual matter, that is, it depends upon personal choice. God can save out of a church only those whose experience measures up to the prescribed standard. Thus, out of the large body of Christians in the last days, only a remnant will “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17). It is not God’s desire that only a few should be saved. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). But the free will of man must choose salvation and, through the divine help offered, meet the standard.

9. *Because I am broken.* Some of the versions read, “I have broken,” that is, God broke their hearts in an effort to lead them to repentance.

Eyes. Here probably mentioned as the means by which their hearts have been enticed to evil.

A whoring. Apostasy from God is described under the figure of unfaithfulness to the marriage relationship (see Jer. 3:20).

Lothe themselves. Self-loathing is a mark of godly sorrow, which, if permitted to have its perfect work, leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10); otherwise the loathing represents only remorse for consequences. It was in such unholy remorse that the majority of the Israelites indulged. Nevertheless, some did sorrow after a godly sort. Like Job, they cried out, “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). True sorrow is thus produced: God arrests a man in his self-willed course and bids him examine himself in the mirror of His perfect law. In the light of that law, which is the glory of the sinless Jesus, the soul discovers that it is honeycombed with sin. Self-exaltation vanishes. Intense self-loathing begins. When in this state the sinner casts his helpless soul upon Jesus and trusts wholly in the divine merits, his repentance is accepted.

11. *Smite ..., and stamp.* Two outward gestures are commanded to convey a mixture of emotions, amazement, wonder, indignation, displeasure, grief, sorrow, and pity—first at the sin he has beheld and second at the evils he foresees (see Eze. 22:13; cf. Num. 24:10; Job 27:23).

12. *That is far off.* There would be no escape from these judgments. All, wherever they might be, would be overtaken.

13. *Every high hill.* A more complete characterization of the localities in which the people had reared idol shrines (see v. 6). Hilltops were favorite places for the erection of shrines.

14. *Diblath.* This place cannot be definitely identified. The name does not appear elsewhere in the Bible. Almon-diblathaim, a dual form, is mentioned in Num. 33:46, 47; and Beth-diblathaim in Jer. 48:22. These two towns, perhaps identical, were in Moab, probably to be identified with the modern *Khirbet Deleilat esh-Sherqiyeh* on the tableland on the eastern border beyond which lay the great desert that stretches eastward. Another possibility is that Diblath should read, “Riblah,” the “r” in Hebrew having been mistaken for a “d,” the two letters being very similar. Riblah is about 52 mi. (83.2 km.) south-southwest of Hamath. The town was used by Egyptian and Babylonian kings as a base of military operations in Syria (2 Kings 23:33; 25:5, 6). An alternative translation of the passage is “from the wilderness toward Riblah,” an expression analogous to “from Dan to Beer-sheba.” Thus, the whole region from the wilderness in the south to Riblah in the north would become a wilderness.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

CHAPTER 7

1 *The final desolation of Israel.* 16 *The mournful repentance of them that escape.* 20 *The enemies defile the sanctuary because of the Israelites' abominations.* 23 *Under the type of a chain is shewed their miserable captivity.*

1. The word of the Lord. The repetition of this phrase (see on ch. 6:1) suggests that there has been another period of silence, which is now followed by a fresh prophetic communication. The subject of this chapter deals with the nearness and the completeness of the judgments earlier predicted. The chapter is more poetic than preceding messages and may be compared with a song of lamentation.

2. An end. The repetition of this expression is doubtless for emphasis (see v. 6; cf. ch. 12:21–28). This is the keynote of ch. 7.

Four corners. Literally, “four wings.” The expression is similar to our “north, south, east, and west” (see Isa. 11:12; Rev. 7:1). The end of Israel as a nation is here foretold.

3. Will judge thee. Verses 3, 4 are repeated almost exactly in vs. 8, 9. These passages represent a kind of refrain in the song of lamentation, which lends greater force to the denunciations.

According to thy ways. Compare Rev. 22:12. Some psychologists have claimed that man is not responsible for his actions. They assert that he is the victim of glandular disorders, or an unstable nervous system, or a bad environment. The religion of the Bible affirms and demonstrates that the power of the gospel is greater than every hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil.

4. Neither will I have pity. That is, God will not permit His pity, which is an integral attribute of His character, to avert the judgments. Here the word for “pity” no longer refers to the emotion of pity, but to that which one would do if he has pity. Another interesting example of such a turn in meaning is the Hebrew word *paqad*, meaning basically, “to visit.” It also takes on the meaning of that which one does as a result of the visit, and so is frequently translated “to punish” (Isa. 13:11; Jer. 21:14).

5. An only evil. Literally, “one evil,” perhaps in the sense of “a unique evil,” or “a final evil,” one complete in itself, requiring no repetition. Many Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures), by a change of one letter render the passage “evil after evil.” “Evil” (Heb. *ra'ah*) signifies not only moral evil but also “calamity” and “disaster.” These latter meanings apply in this text. Calamity upon calamity was to come upon Judah.

6. Watcheth. Heb. *quṣ*, “to awake.” The word is thus translated in nearly every other occurrence (see Ps. 3:5; 73:20; Dan. 12:2; etc.). The clause may be rendered “it awaketh against thee.” There is a play on words in the Hebrew which cannot be reproduced in the English, the word for “end” (*qeṣ*) having almost the same sound as the verb for “watcheth” (*quṣ*). The predicted doom is rousing itself to accomplish its errand of destruction.

7. Morning. Heb. *ṣephirah*, the meaning of which is here uncertain. It occurs only here, in v. 10, and in Isa. 28:5, where it is translated “crown.” The root from which it may be derived means “to plait,” “to interweave.” The translation “doom” (RSV) is a conjectural attempt at the metaphorical meaning.

Sounding again. Heb. *hed*, a word occurring only here in the OT. *Hed* should probably read *hedad*, a shout of joy of those pressing grapes (see Jer. 25:30; 51:14). In its place would be the discordant and terrifying noise of battle and war.

8. I will judge thee. Verses 8, 9 largely repeat vs. 3, 4. The last sentence is more emphatic, “Ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth.”

10. The rod hath blossomed. Jewish interpreters have commonly understood the rod to refer to the Chaldean conqueror, as a rod of the Lord’s anger. Like a shoot, his power was growing, giving signs of vigorous vitality, rapidly taking form that would enable the conqueror to strike hard. The translation “injustice” (RSV) appears to be an attempt to give a metaphorical meaning to “rod,” thus to secure a better parallel with the abstract noun “pride.” The “pride” could also be applied to the Chaldeans, or else to Israel as working out her own punishment through her haughtiness.

11. Violence is risen up. The literary construction indicates that the writer was deeply affected, for he speaks in short, pointed statements, and leaves out some of the verbs, which style makes the sense somewhat doubtful. Literally translated, the passage reads, “Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness, not from them, not from their multitude, and not from [?; the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain] and not lamentation [LXX, “ornament,” “beauty”] in them.” “Lamentation” is the Jewish interpretation of the Heb. *noah*. Perhaps had one been present and had heard the cadence of his voice, and seen his gestures and facial expression, the meaning would have been plain. If “lamentation” is the proper interpretation, the sense would be that the usual burial rites would be neglected. If “beauty” is the meaning, then the passage emphasizes the fact that all attractiveness or eminence would be consumed away.

12. Let not the buyer rejoice. An important feature of Israelitic activity was the buying and selling of land. According to law (Lev. 25:14–16) the possession was in no case to extend beyond the year of jubilee, at which time all land was to revert to its possessor by inheritance. Real estate selling at low prices would naturally make the buyer rejoice. On the other hand, men usually part with their estates grieving that they must transfer their rights to others. With the siege imminent, Ezekiel now declares that the buyer will have no reason to rejoice, because he will not enjoy what he has bought. Nor will the seller have reason to mourn for the loss of his possessions by sale. The approaching captivity would deprive him of his property anyway.

13. Shall not return. The seller was doubtless at such an age that he could scarcely expect to live till the 70 years’ captivity ended. Nor would the year of jubilee be any advantage to him in captivity.

14. None goeth. A picture of a demoralized spirit, perhaps due to a consciousness of guilt that has at last led them to realize that they cannot expect to receive help from God.

16. Like doves. Some few would escape and find refuge in the mountains, but their condition would be one of extreme hardship.

Mourning. Heb. *hamah*, a word used of the growl of bears (Isa. 59:11), the barking of dogs (Ps. 59:6, 14), the tumult of nations (Ps. 46:6). When sin brings forth its bitter results there are often poignant regrets. Unfortunately these regrets are over the hard consequences of sin rather than over the fact that sin has dishonored God. Men long for the removal of the consequences rather than for deliverance from sin’s guilt and power, but the latter must precede the former.

In the second part of the verse the LXX reads, “I will put all of them to death, each one in his iniquities.” The Syriac reads, “all of them will die,” as though the Hebrew manuscript from which the translation was made read *muth* instead of *hamah*.

17. Weak as water. A figure of the weakness and general helplessness of the fugitives. The hands that should have been strong to hold weapons of war and to build fortifications failed to function. The knees that should have been strong to stand in battle, or to flee from the drawn sword, refused to respond.

18. With sackcloth. In the East a common sign of sorrow, humiliation, and misery. The horror sprang from the dreadful apprehension of growing evils, the shame from disappointments, conscious guilt, and disillusionment.

Baldness. Baldness was often self-inflicted as a token of great mourning (see Isa. 15:2; Jer. 7:29; 48:37; Amos 8:10).

19. Their silver. Probably a reference to the casting away of valuables in flight, or to the idols, which proved worthless in the day of calamity.

Shall be removed. Better, “shall be accounted an unclean thing.” The Hebrew word occurring here is used in Lev. 15:19–33.

20. His ornament. The Syriac and Symmachus read “their ornament.” The people had used their riches, their silver and gold, to set up their detestable idols, which God abhorred.

Majesty. Heb. *ga’on*, here, better, “pride,” as in Lev. 26:19; Job 35:12; Ps. 59:12; etc. Obviously a reference to the sanctuary, sacredly guarded from all intrusion, the center of the religious and national life of Israel.

23. Chain. Heb. *rattoq*, the meaning of which is uncertain. *Rattoq* occurs only here in the Bible, although a feminine form, *rethuqoth*, is translated “chains” in Isa. 40:19. The LXX translates the opening phrase, “and they shall work disorder.” If “chain” is the correct reading here, the prophet was probably foretelling events by actions. As Jeremiah was commanded to make bonds and yokes (Jer. 27:2), so Ezekiel may here have been bidden to make a chain to symbolize the approaching captivity, when king and people should be carried in chains to Babylon (2 Kings 25:7; Jer. 40:1).

24. Worst of the heathen. That is, the Chaldeans.

Their holy places. The pronoun indicates that God does not regard the Israelites as His. The plural may denote the Temple with respect to its holy places. This plural form for the sanctuary meets us repeatedly in the book of Hebrews and is there not always consistently translated. But in every instance the reference is to the heavenly sanctuary, consisting of the two apartments. Some think the reference is not to the Temple but to private sanctuaries erected on housetops and in gardens.

25. Destruction. Heb. *qephadah*, a word occurring only here. It comes from a verb root that means “to roll together.” Hence *qephadah* may refer to the contortions caused by fear. The reference is doubtless to the horror and dismay accompanying great judgments, such as our Lord vividly described in His phrase, “Men’s hearts failing them for fear” (Luke 21:26).

26. Rumour. Compare the expression, “wars and rumours of wars” (Matt. 24:6; cf. Luke 21:9). The currency of uncertain reports at the time of an invasion and war intensifies the wretchedness. In this period of trouble the three principal sources of

instruction, the prophets, the priests, and the elders, are all represented as resorted to in vain (see 1 Sam. 28:6; Jer. 5:31; 6:13; 23:21–40; 28:1–9; Lam. 2:9; Amos 8:11; Micah 3:6).

27. The king shall mourn. The king, the prince (at times synonymous with “king,” as in chs. 12:12; 19:1; here perhaps the heir to the throne), and the common people—all classes of the population—suffer alike.

They shall know. See on ch. 6:7.

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CHAPTER 8

1 *Ezekiel, in a vision of God at Jerusalem, 5 is shewed the image of jealousy, 7 the chambers of imagery, 13 the mourners for Tammuz, 15 the worshippers towards the sun. 18 God's wrath for their idolatry.*

1. Sixth year. That is, of Jehoiachin's captivity (see on ch. 1:2), 592/591 B.C. (see p. 572). A new series of prophecies begins here and extends to the end of ch. 19. The date shows that the series began a little over a year after Ezekiel's call to the prophetic office (see ch. 1:2). Since his first vision Ezekiel's time had been divided into 7 days (ch. 3:15), 390 days (ch. 4:5), and 40 days (ch. 4:6), in all, unless concurrent, at least 437 days. It has been urged that this time period cannot be fitted in between the dates of the two visions, a period, apparently, of 14 lunar months, or approximately 413 days. There is, of course, considerable difference of opinion as to the application of these periods, and furthermore, there is no necessity that a fresh revelation wait till the expiration of these periods (see on ch. 4:5). On the other hand, in order to adjust their lunar year with the solar, the Jews added an extra month every two or three years. If the 5th year under consideration was an intercalary year (as it very probably was, according to the 19-year cycle), the extra month would increase the total to about 442 days.

Sixth month. September, 592 or 591 (see p. 572).

Elders. These may have represented a degree of civil organization preserved in captivity and not suppressed by the Babylonians. It is possible that they, together with the exiled priests, frequently consulted one another about public affairs. The fact that the elders came to inquire of the Lord concerning their present state of affairs (see chs. 14:1; 33:31) makes it plain that Ezekiel was already known as a prophet and held in respect among the captives.

2. The appearance of fire. Ezekiel does not directly specify the being as human in form, but the mention of the loins and of “the form of an hand” (v. 3) implies that such was the case. The LXX reads “man” instead of “fire.” Ezekiel was given another theophany (see on ch. 1:1). The vision occurred while the elders were sitting before the prophet. They evidently saw nothing, but Ezekiel's state of vision doubtless prepared them to listen at the close of his vision to “all the things that the Lord had shewed” the prophet (ch. 11:25).

3. The spirit lifted me up. We need not suppose that Ezekiel was literally transported in body. The movements were doubtless in vision (see on Dan. 8:2). But like Paul, Ezekiel could probably not tell whether he was out of the body or in the body (see 2 Cor. 12:3).

The door of the inner gate. This is one of the gateways that led from the court of the people to the court of the priests. The account of the building of Solomon's Temple does

not mention gateways leading from one of these courts to the other, but there is evidence of such in the later Temple of Herod. It was probably one of the most conspicuous portions of the Temple, where the people gathered in large numbers.

Image. Heb. *semel*, a word occurring only here and in v. 5; Deut. 4:16 (translated “figure”); 2 Chron. 33:7, 15 (translated “idol”). Various conjectures have been made as to the identity of this image, such as, that it represents Baal, Molech, or Astarte. But perhaps “image of jealousy” was not designed as a proper name designating a particular heathen deity, but rather as a descriptive name of an image that provoked the Lord to jealousy. The setting up of a rival god in the place dedicated to the worship of Yahweh would produce such an effect. There may have been heathen idols in the Temple at this time. A growing propensity toward idolatry had been evident since the days of Solomon, who had erected places of worship for the various idols of his wives “in the hill that is before Jerusalem” 1 Kings 11:7. Possibly pressure of the Assyrian king, Ahaz had placed an idolatrous altar in the Temple itself, moving the brazen altar to the north to make room for it (see on 2 Kings 16:10–16). Later Manasseh “built altars in the house of the Lord” (2 Kings 21:4). With the exception of Josiah, subsequent kings of Judah were wicked. It is altogether possible that they used the Temple area for idolatrous worship.

4. The glory. The presence of the glory of God was a token that He was aware of the idolatry of His people and would search into the secrets of their worship.

5. Toward the north. This indicates that in vision Ezekiel was inside the court of the priests; otherwise he could not have looked toward the north to see the idol in the north gate. The image had already been mentioned (v. 3), but now the attention of the prophet is directed to it more particularly. It was not enough that he should merely see it in passing.

6. That I should go. In the Hebrew the verb is in the form of an infinitive with no subject expressed. We may regard either the people as the ones to be removed, or the Lord as the one who would forsake His sanctuary. The latter seems the more probable. The people placed their confidence in the belief that God would protect His Temple and His city. The prophet was to inform them that because of their iniquities both the city and the Temple would be given over to destruction.

Greater abominations. A recurring refrain in this chapter (vs. 13, 15). The prophet is led onward as through the successive stages of an intrigue of idolatry.

7. Door of the court. Ezekiel had previously stood inside the inner court (see on v. 5). Now he is taken to the gate itself, which seems to have been surrounded by chambers (see Jer. 35:4; Eze. 40:44).

8. Dig. This was done in vision. The object of this part of the vision was doubtless to stress the extreme secrecy of the activities that the prophet was to see.

10. Pourtrayed. Perhaps carved in the form of relief work. Some commentators identify the idolatrous rites here practiced as of Egyptian origin, others, as of Babylonian. The word here translated “pourtrayed” appears again in ch. 23:14, specifically with reference to Chaldean images. The figures may not have been borrowed from any one source, but undoubtedly represented a variety of rites.

11. Seventy. Possibly a round number. The group must not be confused with the Sanhedrin, which did not come into existence till after the Captivity. The company was seen in vision, not in actuality, and any discussion as to whether the Temple courts contained a chamber big enough to hold so large a number is therefore beside the point.

Jaazaniah. Some have attempted to identify him with “Jaazaniah the son of Azur,” one of the wicked princes mentioned in ch. 11:1. The identity cannot be established, nor can we be certain that the Shaphan here mentioned was the scribe serving under King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8, 9). If he was, the reference to him here as the ancestor of Jaazaniah might be for the purpose of showing the contrast in their characters and revealing the moral decline of the leaders.

His censer. As a climax, the 70 elders were all acting as priests, and were offering to their pictured idols the incense that none but the sons of Aaron had a right to use (2 Chron. 26:16–18) and which was to be offered only to the true God.

12. The Lord seeth us not. They did not deny the being the providence of God, but seemed to think of Yahweh as a local deity who had abdicated. Ezekiel puts the philosophy of the group into the form of a popular saying, a characteristic feature of the prophet’s style (see chs. 9:9; 11:3, 15; 12:22, 27; 18:2, 25, 29; 33:10, 24, 30; 35:12; 37:11).

14. Tammuz. A deity worshiped by the Babylonians under the name *Du’ūzu*, variously designated the brother or son, husband or lover, of the goddess Ishtar. Tammuz was the god of vegetation and pasture and the patron of flocks. According to ancient tradition he died annually and descended into the nether world. His passing was marked by the drying up of the crops, pastures, and streams by the summer’s heat. His departure was celebrated by public festivities of mourning and the singing of dirges in the 4th month of the Semitic year (Duzu or Tammuz, beginning in our June or July, see Vol. II, p. 116.) Annually, too, Ishtar was believed to descend into the underworld to awaken the dead god. His awakening and return were supposed to cause vegetation to flourish again. The Greeks preserved a similar account in their myth of Demeter and Persephone.

Tammuz was worshiped in Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. In Phoenicia, the cult took the form of the worship of Adonis (Semitic *’adon*, “lord”), a local Phoenician deity, and the name Adonis was transmitted to the Greeks, whose myth of Venus and Adonis was passed on through the Romans. Although early tradition identified Tammuz with Adonis, actually the worship of Adonis was only one form of the widespread worship of Tammuz. When the cult was first adopted by the Jews is not known.

The fact that the Tammuz festival fell in the fourth month and not in the “sixth month,” the time of Ezekiel’s vision, presents no problem. The prophet saw it in vision and was doubtless shown representations of the wickedness practiced at various times in Jerusalem.

16. Five and twenty. The LXX reads “twenty.” The significance of the number is not clear. Some have conjectured that it referred to the high priest and the heads of the 24 courses (see on 1 Chron. 24:1), thus representing the whole body of the priests. They were standing between the altar and the Temple, in a most sacred part of the court. There, turning their backs upon the Temple of the Lord, they worshiped the sun. The adoration of the sun, Shamash, was early practiced by the Canaanites and had found its way into the worship of the kings and people of Judah (2 Kings 23:5, 11; cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; Job 31:26). The fact that they stood in the inner court has led to the belief that they were probably priests, but others besides priests sometimes entered there (2 Kings 11:4–15). If they were the special guardians of true religion, their sin was a most flagrant insult to God. Thus it was marked as the greatest of the abominations (see 2 Chron. 36:14).

17. Violence. Heb. *chamas*. The same word is used to describe the antediluvian wickedness (Gen. 6:11). The LXX reads “lawlessness.”

Have returned. Or, “turned again,” that is, the people went back again and again to their evil doings.

Put the branch. In the so-called “Adonis gardens” rootless flowers were put in a bowl filled with earth, and held up before the face. The custom is pictured on a mural from Pompei. Ancient Jewish tradition claims that the reading should be “my nose,” that is, the Lord’s nose. It paraphrases the passage, “they put an affront upon me, by turning their back parts to me in the place dedicated to my worship.” The LXX supports, in part, this meaning, rendering the passage, “they are as those that mock.”

18. Not hear. It is too late now to avert national catastrophe. Yet, individual salvation is not precluded. The few “that sigh and that cry for all the abominations” done in the land will be delivered. The rest have chosen destruction by their stubborn course.

By their stubborn refusal to listen to the voice of the Lord calling them to amend their ways, men eventually render themselves deaf to the voice of God. When that time comes God will no longer hear them.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 10–13PK 448

14–18PK 449

CHAPTER 9

1

1 *A vision, whereby is shewed the preservation of some, 5 and the destruction of the rest. 8 God cannot be intreated for them.*

1. He cried also. Chapter 9 is a continuation of the symbolic vision of ch. 8. The prophet records what passes before him in panoramic view, leaving for us the interpretation as to what is represented by the various symbols. The speaker is the same as throughout ch. 8. His identity is shown by the prophet’s address to him in v. 8, “Ah Lord God!”

Them that have charge. The phrase is a translation of the Heb. *pequddoth*, singular *pequddah*, a word elsewhere rendered “office” (Num. 4:16), “visitation” (Jer. 8:12). It is also used of “officers” (Isa. 60:17). If this last rendering is applicable here, there is a picture of overseers, watchers, or guards (see Dan. 4:13) who attend to the execution of the sentences of God. The entire clause may also be rendered as in the LXX, “The vengeance upon the city has drawn near.”

2. Six men. These executioners of vengeance are pictured as human in form. In primary application they represent the Babylonians, who were to execute the divine sentence upon the city. In secondary application they portend the agencies of judgments which, at the close of time, will execute sentence, first upon those who have professed to be the spiritual guardians of the people, and later upon the wicked in general.

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Higher gate. Since the courts of the Temple were built in stages, the inner court was the higher. “Toward the north” designates the gate as the one where the prophet had been shown the idolatries (ch. 8:5).

One man among them. This man was one of the six bearing the slaughtering weapons, and not a seventh, as some interpreters assert (see 3T 266, 267). He was “clothed with linen,” the ordinary priestly garment, and the special garment of the high priest at the ceremonies of the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

Inkhorn. Heb. *qeseth*, a word occurring only here, probably derived from the Egyptian *gśty*, “the palette of a writer,” hence a case containing pens, knife, and ink. The LXX, perhaps following a different text, reads “a girdle of sapphire” instead of “inkhorn.” But the Hebrew seems to be the preferable reading.

3. The glory. That is, the glory described in ch. 8:4, which was a reappearance of the vision described in ch. 1.

To the threshold. The removal was probably to indicate that the command for judgment would proceed from the very Temple itself, which the Jews considered the pledge of their safety.

4. Mark. Heb. *taw*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the time of Ezekiel this Hebrew character was written in the form of **X**. The marking was done in vision, and the exact nature of the mark is perhaps not important. An ancient interpretation that saw in the sign a prefigurement of the cross is rather fanciful. In the vision the mark was doubtless literal, but in significance it had reference wholly to character. The messenger was to pay no regard to birth or position, but to mark only those who mourned for the prevailing sinfulness and kept themselves aloof from it.

The vision had primary reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It will have another fulfillment during the closing scenes of this world’s history. It parallels closely the visions of Rev. 7; 15; 16. The distinguishing mark in Revelation is “the seal of God” and, like the mark in Ezekiel, is based on character qualifications. God places His mark of approval upon all who, through the power of the Holy Spirit, reflect the image of Jesus (see COL 67). This stamp of approbation has been likened to God’s mark of ownership, as though God inscribes upon those who qualify for citizenship in His kingdom His name and address—“God, New Jerusalem” (TM 446).

The outward, visible sign of this completion of the work of grace in the soul will be the observance of the true Sabbath of the Bible (see 8T 117). This will be brought about in the following way: The seventh-day Sabbath has always stood as God’s appointed rest day for man. Established at creation (Gen. 2:1–3), it was designed to be of perpetual obligation. The command to observe it was placed in the bosom of the moral law (Ex. 20:8–11). Neither Christ nor His apostles abrogated the Sabbath. The great apostasy following the death of the apostles presumed to set it aside and substitute in its place another day of rest, the first day of the week. But the Word of God predicts a great work of Sabbath reform to precede the second coming of Christ. (Isa. 56:1, 2, 6–8; 58:12, 13; Rev. 14:6–12; see GC 451–460). It also predicts that simultaneously Satan, the great apostate leader, will exalt his own counterfeit system of religion, presenting a false sabbath, Sunday, as the day of worship (Rev. 13; 14:9–12; cf. Dan. 7:25). He will be successful to the extent that he will be able to unite the whole world in a great religious reform movement, a prominent feature of which will be the exaltation of Sunday (Rev.

13:8; 14:8; 16:14; 18:3; see GC chs. 35–40). As a result of his efforts in this direction the whole world will be divided into two camps, those who are faithful to God and keep His Sabbath, and those who join the universal counterfeit religious movement and honor the false sabbath. The observance of the true Sabbath will thus become the distinguishing mark of the true worshiper of God.

Yet it is not the outward observance of the Sabbath that constitutes the mark. The seal stands for that *character* qualification that all must have who are accounted worthy of citizenship in the kingdom of glory about to be established. Only those who have purified their souls will cling to the Sabbath in that awful time of trouble preceding the return of Jesus. Insincere Sabbathkeepers will abandon the ranks of God's people and unite with Satan against heaven, and join in the battle against the Ruler of the universe (TM 465). Thus only the genuine and true remain as the sole defenders of God's holy Sabbath. These are joined by others of God's true children who, until now, have been scattered throughout the various communions of Christendom, but who, under the increasing light of the loud cry, embrace the Sabbath and join God's remnant people (see GC 611, 612).

The mark is placed upon those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done." Those who belong to this class have been described as distinguished by their soul anguish over the declensions among God's professed people. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of every kind are in the church. They feel powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity and hence are filled with grief and alarm (see 5T 210). Those in the other class seek to throw a cloak over existing evils and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent. They claim that God is too good and too merciful to punish evil. The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil, they say. They assert the Lord does not expect so high a standard, and will be satisfied with a mere desire to do right. But the Lord cannot change His standard. To do so would be to change Himself. Rather, He supplies grace for the acquirement of every virtue and the correction of every defect. He asks of every Christian that full advantage be taken of these provisions. He demands no less than perfection. Unless this is attained, the soul will be found without the seal of God when probation closes.

6. *Begin at my sanctuary.* In its primary application this decree marks the close of Jerusalem's probation. God had exhausted His resources in appealing to rebellious Israel. His restraining power would be removed from the invading Chaldeans. Mercilessly their armies would execute the sentence to "slay utterly old and young." They would begin at the sanctuary, where the gross sins of the people had been concentrated.

These scenes will be re-enacted in the last days. Judgment, then, too, begins at the "house of God" (1 Peter 4:17), with those to whom God has given great light and who have stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, but who have betrayed their trust (see 5T 211). These unfaithful shepherds receive first the abuse that will be heaped upon them by those who have been deceived by their guile (EW 282). Later, they perish in the general destruction that precedes and accompanies the second coming of Christ (see Rev. 15–19).

7. *Defile the house.* The Jews expected that God would spare His house from defilement. In this they were disappointed. In part the defilement was effected by the bleeding corpses of the idolatrous worshipers.

8. *I was left.* In vision Ezekiel saw Jerusalem reduced to a city of the dead. It seemed to him that he was standing alone in the midst of the slain. No notice is here made of any

who, because of the protecting mark, were saved. Evidently they constituted a small minority.

Residue of Israel. The ten tribes had already gone into captivity in 723/722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6). A considerable group from the southern kingdom of Judah had been removed in 605 B.C., and especially in 597 B.C. (see p. 568). Ezekiel pleads for the remnant still left. The nature and magnitude of the sin justified the judgment.

9. Earth. Heb. *'ereš*, which may also be translated, “land.” Either translation makes good sense. The people asserted that the Lord was not concerned with the conduct of men. They imagined they had free scope to act as they chose toward one another, no one calling them into account for their deeds. The result was moral decay.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 5T 207

1, 2 GC 656; 3T 266

2–7TM 431

3–65T 207

4 GC 656; PK 590; TM 445; 3T 266, 370; 5T 210, 474

4–65T 505

5, 6 3T 267; 5T 211

6 GC 656

10 TM 432

11 EW 279; SR 402

CHAPTER 10

1 *The vision of the coals of fire, to be scattered over the city.* 8 *The vision of the cherubims.*

1. Then I looked. The vision described in ch. 1:15–28 reappears. In the expanse of firmament there is seen, as before, the likeness of a sapphire throne. Ezekiel does not mention a being upon the throne. That one was there is implied by the “he spake” of the following verse.

Cherubims. Better, “cherubim.” “Cherubim” is the transliteration of the Hebrew plural *kerubim*, and does not require the “s” as a sign of the plural. The “cherubims” of ch. 10 correspond to the “living creatures” of ch. 1. In Hebrew theology a cherub was a being of a sublime and celestial nature, of human form, though with wings. Cherubim guarded the gate of Paradise (Gen. 3:24). The statues over-shadowing the mercy seat, both in the tabernacle and in Solomon’s Temple, were called cherubim (Ex. 25:18; 1 Kings 6:23; cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 22:11). Contrasted with the upright form of the cherubim described by Ezekiel, the Babylonian cherubim, called *karūbu*, or *kāribu*, literally, “intercessors,” were in the form of human-headed animals such as bulls and lions although some had the form of human beings.

2. Unto the man. The captain of the six ministers of judgment (ch. 9:2) is addressed and commanded to fill his hands with coals of fire and scatter them over the city. The act symbolizes the impending destruction of the city. It is not certain whether the imagery actually signifies the means of destruction (2 Chron. 36:19). The Temple and city were burned by the Chaldeans (2 Kings 25:9). Compare Rev. 8:5.

4. Cherub. The singular form is used in the collective sense. The LXX retains the plural. The movements of the glory of the Lord seem to have been symbolic of the divine Presence preparing to leave the Temple.

5. The voice. The fact that the wings were in motion suggests that the cherubim are preparing to depart from the Temple (see ch. 1:24).

Almighty God. Heb. *’El-Shaddai*. A frequent title of God, *Shaddai* often occurs without *’El* (God), especially in the book of Job, where there are 31 such instances. The root meaning of *Shaddai* is not definitely known. Scholars have offered various suggestions, but none of these is satisfactory (see Vol. I, p. 171).

6. Take fire. These movements symbolize the close connection between heaven and the events on this earth. The course of history is not the outworking of blind forces, but behind the play and counterplay of human events in God working out His purposes (see on ch. 1:19).

8. A man’s hand. The hand represents the hand of the Omnipotent One sustaining and guiding the heavenly beings. These, in turn, impelled the wheels, symbolic of the hand of God in the affairs of this earth (see PK 536).

9. Four wheels by the cherubims. Verses 9–17 largely repeat the description given in the vision of ch. 1 (see comments there). There are some variations. The repetition is not accidental, for here the movements are given in connection with the progress of the narrative, and God is shown as directly connected with the events leading to Jerusalem’s downfall. The vision of the living creatures at Chebar was general, showing the hand of God in all history; the one at Jerusalem, specific, showing His hand in one significant event. Among the variations are the mention of the abundance of eyes (ch. 10:12). They cover the whole body of the cherubim as well as the rings of the wheels (ch. 1:18). These eyes doubtless symbolize vigilance and intelligence. They show that nothing can escape the eye of God, since “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). In Eze. 10:14, where a description of the four faces is given, “the face of a cherub” takes the place of “the face of an ox” (ch. 1:10). Literally, the phrase reads “the face of the cherub,” from which some have concluded that a cherub originally signified an ox (see on v. 1). Verse 14 does not appear in the LXX, a fact that leaves in doubt the correct form of the text.

19. Mounted up. In v. 3 the cherubim had stood by “the right side of the house.” The removal to the east gate is preparatory to the final departure.

Every one. The Hebrew verb requires a singular subject; hence the translators of the KJV supplied “every one.” The LXX and the Syriac read, “they stood.”

20. This is. These words make evident the identity of what he saw in the two visions.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–22Ed 177, 178; GW 489; PK 535–537; TM 213; 5T 751–754; 9T 259, 260
8, 21 Ed 177; FE 409; MB 121; PK 176, 535; 5T 751, 754

CHAPTER 11

1 *The presumption of the princes.* 4 *Their sin and judgment.* 13 *Ezekiel complaining, God sheweth him his purpose in saving a remnant, 21 and punishing the wicked.* 22 *The glory of God leaveth the city.* 24 *Ezekiel is returned to the captivity.*

1. Moreover. The events of ch. 11 do not follow chronologically those of chs. 9, 10. The vision appears to return to give further details regarding the moral condition of Jerusalem’s leaders.

East gate. The place to which Ezekiel had seen the cherubim go (ch. 10:19).

Five and twenty men. The same number that he had seen worshiping the sun in the inner court (ch. 8:16), but probably not the same group. Those were possibly priests (see on ch. 8:16), whereas these seem to have been secular leaders. However, the evidence of a distinction is not conclusive.

Jaazaniah. The name means “Yahweh hears.” Some have suggested that because of their significance the names here given were intended to bring out the false hopes with which the people deluded themselves. Azur possibly means “one helped”; Pelatiah means “Yahweh sets free”; and Benaiah, “Yahweh builds.” If the significance of names is the point of emphasis, the sudden death of Pelatiah (v. 13) would be strikingly impressive. On the other hand, Jaazaniah and Pelatiah may have been singled out simply because they were well-known leaders of apostasy.

3. It is not near. The Hebrew of this half-proverbial saying is so tersely expressed that it is obscure. The passage reads literally, “not near to build houses. It [the city] the caldron, we the flesh.” There may be a jeering reference to the message that Jeremiah had sent to the captives in Babylon to build houses and to make themselves comfortable, for the time of the Captivity would be long. This message angered many of the captives, and they sent letters to Jerusalem demanding that Jeremiah be punished (Jer. 29:24–28). The saying of the princes was possibly in contradiction to Jeremiah’s message, which stated: “The time to build houses for a long captivity is not near.”

Some think the reference is to the rebellious leaders in Jerusalem, who, ignoring Jeremiah’s warning concerning the impending destruction of the city, continued to lay plans for building operations in the doomed city.

The metaphor of the caldron seems to be borrowed from Jeremiah (see Jer. 1:13). The meaning may be that as a caldron protects the flesh in it from the fire, so the walls of the city will protect its inhabitants from the army of the Chaldeans. The LXX has the saying in the form of a question expecting a positive answer, “Is not the time near to build houses?” The attitude thus expressed clearly reflects the self-confident boasting of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (see Jer. 28:3). Jeremiah had counseled the Jews that were in the city to go out and surrender to the Chaldeans (Jer. 21:9). This counsel they insolently rejected, by choosing to remain in the “caldron.” This thought fits the context of the chapter, because the narrative proceeds to show that this “privilege” would be denied them. It is also possible that the metaphor means that as the “caldron” is the place where the “flesh” belongs, so Jerusalem is where its inhabitants belong—implying that they will remain there. Compare Jer. 13:12.

5. I know the things. Because of His omniscience God is cognizant of the real aims, wishes, and motives that underlie outward acts (see 1 Chron. 28:9; Prov. 15:11; Jer. 17:10).

6. Your slain. Probably thus named because executions had been carried on without a warrant from God. There may be a reference also to those slain as a result of the Babylonian atrocities. Because of their moral and religious defection the leaders of Jerusalem were accountable for this slaughter.

7. They are the flesh. The people boasted of the protection of their city, and had no intention of heeding Jeremiah’s instruction to abandon the city and surrender to the Chaldeans (Jer. 21:9). But Ezekiel’s solemn warning was that only those whom they had slain would be granted this privilege of remaining inside the city. The living would suffer their doom outside the city walls.

10. *Ye shall fall.* Historically fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar's general, after the capture of Jerusalem, carried the people of the land to the king at Riblah, a town 10 mi. (16 km.) south of Kadesh. There Nebuchadnezzar pronounced judgment upon the captives, slew Zedekiah's sons before the king's eyes, and executed others. After being blinded, Zedekiah and the remnant were transported to Babylon (see 2 Kings 25:6, 7).

13. *Died.* Ezekiel saw the death of Pelatiah only in vision, but the incident was doubtless predictive. Compare the death of Hananiah (Jer. 28:17).

14. *Again the word.* This appears to be a continuation of the previous prophecy, a response to the prophet's intercession. The description of the further removal of the cherubic formation (vs. 22, 23) clearly connects this message with the preceding (see ch. 10:18, 19).

15. *Thy brethren.* That is, those who were with Ezekiel in exile.

Kindred. Heb. *ge'ullah*, a word that refers to the duties of the *go'el*, the blood relative who took up the cause of his near of kin (Lev. 25:25, 48; see on Ruth 2:20).

Get you far. An expression of arrogant confidence devoid of sympathy for the banished. The inhabitants of Jerusalem exhibited a "holier than thou" attitude toward those who were exiles in Babylon.

16. *As a little sanctuary.* Or, "a sanctuary for a little [while]." The word translated "little" may be either an adverb or an adjective. The idea of "a sanctuary for a little time" seems to be the sense intended here. God still regarded His remnant. Through them He planned to accomplish His purposes. He aimed that the Captivity should be a salutary discipline to lead His people back to Him as a preparatory movement that would open the way for the accomplishment of His long-delayed purposes.

17. *Give you.* The arrogant boasters would be thrust out and the exiles whom they disdained would be gathered again and would possess the land (see Num. 14:3, 31, 32).

18. *Take away.* Historically, this was partially fulfilled in the abhorrence with which the Jews regarded idolatry after their return from captivity. But God's purposes far exceeded this. In vs. 18–21 God outlines His plans for the future of the new Israelite state. The passage is a forecast of conditions as they would have been if Israel had fully accepted and followed the divine program.

19. *One heart.* Oneness of purpose and of action would characterize the new Israel of God. Unfortunately the failure of Israel prevented the fulfillment of this promise. Jesus prayed that the blessing might be fulfilled in the Christian church. His prayer was briefly realized in the fervency of the early church, the multitude of whom "were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). Unfortunately, the unity was of short duration. Grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, entered in and tore the believers asunder (Acts 20:29). There has been disunity in the Christian world ever since, a condition that will continue until, at the return of our Lord, "we all come in the unity of the faith" (Eph. 4:13).

Stony heart. The experience of the changed heart is descriptive of the experience of the new birth, more fully revealed in the NT (John 3:3–8; etc.; see ML 24), though by no means applicable only to the Christian Era. God's means of salvation have been the same in all ages, but there has been a gradual unfolding of the divine purpose; not that God holds men in ignorance to their disadvantage, but their unwillingness to accept the revelations from heaven often places a limitation on what God is able to reveal. Precious rays rejected make impossible the sending of further illumination. This was the case with Israel. Had the returning exiles fully entered into the experience here described, more and

more light would have been sent. Unfortunately, they were content with the crippling restrictions posed by their interpretation of the old covenant, and so the fuller light of the gospel came only with the Messiah.

20. Walk in my statutes. Only those who have a heart renewed by divine grace can keep the law of God, “because the carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). The promise of enabling power through the indwelling Spirit was an essential feature of God’s everlasting covenant with man. This point Israel had failed to grasp. Men believed that salvation could be secured by their own efforts. They refused to submit themselves to “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). They saw no need of a Saviour, no need of conversion. They completely spurned the experience that alone would enable them to keep His law.

I will be their God. God planned that the glorious experience here described should be realized after the return from Babylonian captivity. Because the returning exiles failed to fulfill the new-covenant conditions upon which their spiritual prosperity was based, the promise was never fulfilled. God’s promises are conditional. Nevertheless, that which God could not accomplish through the literal seed of Israel, He will accomplish through the spiritual seed (Rom. 9:11). The ultimate fulfillment of this glorious prospect will come at the close of the millennium (Rev. 21:3).

21. Whose heart. Human responsibility, because of the power of choice, will see some choosing “detestable things.” God would have all to be saved, but He will not force the will. Consequently those who are lost will perish as a result of their own choice and not because of any failure on the part of God’s grace.

22. Cherubims. Compare ch. 10:18, 19.

23. The mountain. Probably the mountain that was later known as the Mt. of Olives, a ridge of three principal summits 2,700 ft. (823 m.) above sea level across the Kidron east of Jerusalem. The city has an altitude of 2,500 ft. (777 m.). The site where the divine glory rested after departing from the Temple (DA 829) was the spot from which Jesus later “beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:37–41). It was from here that He announced the second destruction of the rebellious and stubborn city (Matt. 24) and proclaimed the signs of His second advent. From the same mountain He made His visible ascension into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:11, 12). Upon this eminence the New Jerusalem will make its descent (Zech. 14:4, 5, 9; see GC 662, 663).

24. In a vision. See on ch. 8:3.

25. Spake unto them. The elders of Judah (ch. 8:1) had probably waited till Ezekiel came out of his vision and were thus present and conditioned to receive the communication from the Lord.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

19 CH 500; TM 261; SL 90; 5T 218; 8T 136

CHAPTER 12

The type of Ezekiel’s removing. 8 It shewed the captivity of Zedekiah. 17 Ezekiel’s trembling sheweth the Jews’ desolation. 21 The Jews’ presumptuous proverb is reproved. 26 The speediness of the vision.

1. The word of the Lord. The purpose of the present prophecy is to emphasize the worthlessness and folly of trusting in the continuance of the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem and in an early release from Babylonian captivity.

2. Which have eyes. Compare Deut. 29:4; Isa. 6:9; Jer. 5:21; Matt. 13:14, 15. It was doubtless because of this perverse tendency on the part of the people that the prophet was bidden to give a sign to which they would not be able to shut their eyes.

3. Stuff for removing. Better, “equipment for exile,” that is, such equipment as an emigrant would need: clothes, utensils, etc. The preparations were to be made during the day, and the equipment removed to some convenient location.

6. Cover thy face. Probably as a token of how Zedekiah (see on v. 10) would disguise himself to avoid recognition, or perhaps a token of grief, a symbol of the disgrace and sorrow of the exile’s departure.

7. I did so. Ezekiel may have performed the symbolical act without fully understanding what it meant. The fact that the exiles asked him, “What doest thou?” (v. 9) is evidence that the symbolical act was actually performed, and not done in vision.

10. This burden concerneth. Literally, the clause reads, “The prince is this burden in Jerusalem,” that is, the message was concerning the prince. The word translated “burden” (*maśśa’*), common in Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 13:1; 14:28; etc.; Jer. 17:21, 22; etc.), is used by Ezekiel but twice, and only here in the sense of “prophecy.” It has been suggested that Ezekiel avoided it because the word had fallen into discredit through its frequent use by the false prophets (see Jer. 23:33–38). The “prince” is Zedekiah (see 2 Kings 25:2–4; Jer. 39:4).

11. Your sign. That is, a sign to those in captivity. They were to cease resting their hope upon the survival of Jerusalem.

12. Dig through the wall. This incident is not mentioned in the historical narrative (see Jer. 39:4), but there is no reason for assuming that the words were intended figuratively.

13. Yet shall he not see it. The fulfillment of this feature of prophecy is recorded in Jer. 52:11. Before Zedekiah was carried to Babylon his eyes were put out in Riblah; hence he did not see the land of the Chaldeans. Josephus records the interesting, though perhaps apocryphal, story that Zedekiah was inclined to believe the warnings of Jeremiah regarding the Captivity, but his counselors dissuaded him from carrying out the prophet’s advice. When news of Ezekiel’s prophecy stating that Zedekiah should not see the land of the Chaldeans reached Jerusalem, the king concluded the two prophecies to be contradictory, and so disbelieved them both (*Antiquities* x. 7. 2).

14. I will scatter. The capture of the king would result in the scattering of the remnants of the army.

15. They shall know. Grammatically this sentence could refer either to the heathen or to the Israelites, but inasmuch as the phrase “ye [or “they”] shall know that I am the Lord” (chs. 5:13; 6:7; etc.) is a constantly recurring refrain of these prophecies referring to the Israelites, it is likely that they are referred to here.

16. A few men. Literally, “men of number,” that is, men easily counted. These survivors, in telling their tale of shame, would let the heathen know that it was not weakness on the part of the God of Israel that had occasioned the severe distress and subjection of His people, but Israel’s failure to fulfill its divine destiny.

17. The word of the Lord. See on ch. 6:1.

18. Quaking. Earlier (ch. 4:16) Ezekiel had predicted dreadful scarcity. Now he was to demonstrate the terror and distress of the impending siege.

19. People of the land. Doubtless some of Ezekiel's prophetic utterances reached the ears of the inhabitants of Judah. But the predictions were not without significance for the exiles, many of whom expected the remnant in Judah to survive and Jerusalem to be spared. The prophet informed them that their land would be stripped of all its fullness and become utterly waste and desolate.

21. The word of the Lord. See on ch. 6:1.

22. The days are prolonged. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are pictured as mocking at the reliability of the divine threats. Their reply takes the form of a proverbial saying. They declare in effect, "Time is going by and not one forecast of good or evil has come to pass. There is no reason to expect a fulfillment now." Their attitude reflects the common tendency of sinful men to misinterpret the long-suffering and forbearance of God (see Eccl. 8:11; Amos 6:3; Matt. 24:48; 1 Thess. 5:3). Last-day scoffers utter a similar refrain, "Where is the promise of his coming? ... all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:4).

23. The days are at hand. The coming days would bring the speedy fulfillment of every word of the calamities Ezekiel had predicted.

24. Vain vision. The false prophets predicted prosperity and the early return of the captives from Babylon. The true prophets foretold a long captivity, a heavy loss of life, and a destroyed and desolated city and Temple. The scoffers probably argued that Ezekiel's predictions were as vain as he declared those of the false prophets to be. God would effectively answer their reasoning, and convince these false prophets of their lying divination, and these scoffers of their illogical arguments, by bringing about the speedy fulfillment of the predicted doom.

25. In your days. Not upon some future race, but upon the generation then living would come the effects of the vision.

27. Times that are far off. The new utterance is directed against a class that appears, at least, to recognize Ezekiel as a prophet. Or it may be that the interval produced modification in the language of the objectors. Instead of saying that the vision "faileth," they throw the fulfillment far into the future. The Lord meets the idea of postponement by telling the people that nothing He has spoken shall be prolonged. This attitude is typical of the attitude of many awaiting the second coming of Jesus. Though not with words, yet with actions, they are saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming" (see Matt. 24:48). Someday, and soon, with awful and inescapable suddenness the end will burst upon them, and with it the fulfillment of every vision.

The question may be raised, "But why the apparent delay in the coming of Jesus? Have the words of the Lord failed?" Inspiration asks the question and answers it thus: "Has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional" (Ev 695).

We need to recall but a few statements of Bible writers to show that they always considered time as very short. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (1 Cor. 7:29). In his epistle to the Romans he said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:12). Through the seer of Patmos Jesus Himself testified, "The time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3) and "Behold, I come quickly" (ch. 22:6, 7). However, both Paul and John also clearly foretold certain events that must transpire before Jesus' coming (see on 2 Thess. 2:1-5; Rev. 1:3).

It is true that Christ has not come as soon as His remnant people at first hoped, on the basis of fulfilled prophecy. That it was possible for Christ to have come before this has been repeatedly attested (DA 633, 634; GC 458; 6T 450; 8T 115, 116; 9T 29). The reason for the delay is further stated in these words: “The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God’s unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay” (2T 194). This is in harmony with the apostle’s statement in 2 Peter 3:9. The same writer adds that it is the Christian’s duty to hasten the coming of Jesus (v. 12). The divine commentary on the theme of this text reads, “It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (8T 22).

Someday time will be no longer prolonged. “It [the coming of Jesus] will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples” (Ev 697). When God perceives that the moment is right, He will bring about events that will precipitate the end “more quickly than men expect” (GC 631).

Yet, the definite time of His advent cannot be known. Neither ought men to conjecture as to the precise time. Excellent counsel has been given in the following words: “You will not be able to say that he will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off his coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years. It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning, to be as men that wait for the Bridegroom, when he shall return from the wedding” (EGW RH March 22, 1892).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 COL 104; 9T 27
21–28GC 392; PK 450
22 DA 31; PK 700
27, 28 Ed 184

CHAPTER 13

1 *The reproof of lying prophets, 10 and their untempered mortar. 17 Of prophetesses and their pillows.*

1. The word of the Lord. Compare the prophecy of Jer. 23 against the false prophets in and around Jerusalem. Some have thought that Ezekiel here addresses the false prophets among the captives (see Eze. 13:9).

2. Prophets of Israel. The fact that these false teachers are so addressed suggests that they had popular sympathy and acceptance. The spirit of the age approved such false teachers. These prophets might be so self-deceived as to believe that what they were saying was true (see 2 Thess. 2:11), but these pretended divine messengers were instructed to “hear ... the word of the Lord.”

3. Foolish. From the Heb. *nabal*, which indicates not merely an intellectual failing but also a lack in moral quality. In the Hebrew the phrase “the foolish prophets,” *hannebi'im hannebalim*, represents an interesting play on words.

That follow. The latter part of the verse reads literally, “who walk after their own spirit and that which they have not seen.”

4. Like the foxes. Foxes are sly and crafty (Luke 13:32); they destroy vineyards (S. of Sol. 2:15); they inhabit ruins (Lam. 5:18). The false prophets were crafty and mischievous and destructive of God’s vineyard.

5. Ye. That is, the false prophets. The people were addressed in v. 4. In v. 6 the false prophets are again referred to in the third person, with a change back to the second in v. 7. Such changes in person are frequent in prophecy and common in Ezekiel.

Hedge. These false prophets had done nothing by way of warning or instruction to help the nation in its crisis. They were betraying the people into the hands of their enemies instead of helping them. Compare Isa. 1:5; COL 287.

6. Have seen. Heb. *chazah*, a word frequently used with reference to divine utterances (Isa. 1:1; 2:1; etc.).

The Lord saith. These self-styled prophets find their counterpart in many preachers today who propound false doctrines that they passionately assert are supported by a "Thus saith the Lord." No matter how earnestly a doctrine may be propounded, no matter how impressive the titles held by its proponents, it should find no place of acceptance in the believer's creed unless the Lord has actually spoken it. However plausible human theories may appear to be, it should never be forgotten that they lack divine authority.

Others. This word is supplied. The clause may be translated "they hoped to confirm the word." By the fulfillment of the predicted event they hoped to substantiate their reliability. They may have hoped that God would honor their self-appointed mission and cause their presumptuous utterances to materialize.

7. Have ye not? The prophet appears to cross-examine his rivals. To his questions there could be but one answer. The false prophets could not deny the charge. Three calamities are here listed that are to befall these deceitful prophets. "They shall not be in the assembly of my people."

9. Assembly. Heb. *sod*, a secret assembly or privy council.

In the writing. In the register of the Israel that should arise from the faithful remnant they would have no part. An example of the use made of a register on the return from the Captivity is found in Ezra 2:62.

10. Peace. Compare Jer. 6:14; 23:17; Micah 3:5; Zech. 10:2. The false prophets lulled men into a sense of false security, and so anesthetized their consciences. God's true messengers, on the other hand, do not flatter the sinner. Theirs is not a message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. It is theirs to arouse the conscience of the wrongdoer until the soul in anguish exclaims, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). See on Jer. 6:14.

Wall. Heb. *chayis*, the meaning of which is not entirely clear. It seems to represent a party wall, or a partition wall; hence, an unsubstantial structure.

Untempered mortar. Heb. *taphel*, "whitewash." The idea of untempered has become attached to *taphel* through a word spelled the same way, but with a different etymology. Examples of this second word are Job 6:6, where *taphel* denotes something "unsavoury," and Lam. 2:14, where *taphel* is translated "foolish things." The illustration is as follows: Someone built up a flimsy partition wall. The false prophets whitewashed it, improving its appearance, but adding nothing to its strength. The rulers and people devised various schemes, such as an Egyptian alliance (see Jer. 37:5, 7), and the self-appointed prophets gave them weight by their influence and persuasion.

We note a striking parallel in the religious world today. Many false doctrines, which have no support in the Word of God, have been introduced into the Christian faith. They

have their root in tradition, and behind tradition their origin can often be traced to pagan concepts and practices. Instead of abandoning every belief that is not founded on the Sacred Scriptures, men spend an untold amount of energy to “whitewash” these flimsy concepts so as to give them plausibility. A notable example is the effort to supply scriptural evidence for Sunday observance. The majority of Christians observe a day not enjoined in the Bible. They reason that such observance must be right, since the Christian church for centuries has been following this practice. They bypass the plain evidence that points to the seventh day of the week as the true Sabbath, and wrest other scriptures so as to lend support to the first day of the week. The result of all this will be the same as the experience that befell the builders and whitewashers of Ezekiel’s wall (Eze. 13:12–16).

11. Great hailstones. Compare Ps. 11:6; 18:13, 14; Eze. 38:22. Undoubtedly, the reference here is primarily to the Babylonian invasion, which the Jews would be unable to withstand, despite all their boasted preparations. See on ch. 13:12.

12. Wall. Heb. *qir*, generally an outside wall, not a *chayis* (see on v. 10). The reason for the disaster is doubtless that the defective structure was too weak to serve as an outside wall. The terrible disillusionment of the daubers and of those who trusted in their wiles finds its counterpart in the rude awakening of those who, at the end of time, will have staked their all on the great counterfeit religious revival staged by Satan, only to see this system disintegrate under the withering judgments of the seven last plagues. As one of the last great scenes in the drama of the ages, Satan himself will lay claim to divinity and present himself to all the world as God (see 6T 14; 8T 27, 28; 9T 16; TM 62, 364, 365; GC 624). Miracles will be the great agency in the deception (Rev. 13:13, 14; 16:13, 14). As a result of these delusions all except a faithful remnant will be swept into the ranks of the enemy (Rev. 13:8) and will unite with Satan in his battle against God (TM 465). A small remnant alone will remain true in their fidelity to God (Rev. 14:12). When the judgments fall and the multitudes see that he whom they had looked upon as God is powerless to stay the hand of One mightier, the realization suddenly overtakes them that they have been deceived. They turn with rage upon the counterfeit organization that has been created by Satan’s delusions and utterly destroy it (Rev. 17:16, 17; GC 656). Then again it may be said, “The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it” (Eze. 13:15).

17. Against the daughters. False prophetesses are not mentioned elsewhere in the OT. Among true prophetesses are Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and in the NT times Anna (Luke 2:36) and the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8, 9).

18. Woe to the women. Although the general meaning of vs. 18, 19 seems clear, there is considerable uncertainty as to the details. Ezekiel had seen what he describes; we have not. He used words familiar enough then, but since many of them occur nowhere else in the OT, their meaning is not altogether certain.

Pillows. Heb. *kesathoth*, from the Akkadian *kasū*, “to bind,” hence “bands,” or “amulets,” the exact nature of which is a matter of conjecture.

Armholes. Heb. *’aṣṣilim*, “joints.” The phrase reads literally, “joints of my hand,” by which, it appears, the knuckles, wrists, elbows, or shoulders (Jer. 38:12) could be designated. The Hebrew literally reads “my hands.” The ancient versions and the Targums read either “hand” or “hands.” If the possessive pronoun is intended, it would

convey the interesting thought that these false prophetesses were restraining the hands of the Lord Himself.

Kerchiefs. Heb. *mispachoth*, a word occurring only here in the OT, thought to mean some veil or covering for the head. Apparently the veils were not worn by the prophetesses themselves, but by those who came to consult them.

Souls. Heb. *nephashoth* (singular *nephesh*), here simply “persons” (see on Ps. 16:10). The meaning seems to be that these false prophetesses victimized those who resorted to them.

That come. These words are supplied. The sentence may be translated, “Will ye hunt the souls of my people and keep your own souls alive?” The meaning may be that in self-interest the prophetesses lived upon the credulity of their victims.

19. Handfuls of barley. Some have understood the reference here to be the ancient custom of bringing presents to a prophet when consulting him (1 Sam. 9:7, 8; 1 Kings 14:3). Inasmuch as barley was an inferior grain, and handfuls a scant quantity, these words might indicate the exceedingly small profit for which these false prophetesses were willing to pervert the truth and lead the people to their ruin. Others see a reference here to the ancient custom of divination with barley and crumbs.

Hear your lies. The words may indicate a propensity to listen to pleasing falsehoods. Jeremiah describes such a state of things, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so” (Jer. 5:31).

20. To make them fly. From the Heb. *parach*, the meaning of which is uncertain. The general meaning of the verse is clear. The victims would be delivered from the snare of those who had attempted to enslave them. God will not permit a man who is sincere in heart to be deceived.

22. Because with lies. The prophetesses had created false impressions of God on the minds of the righteous and the wicked, discouraging the former in their efforts to do right and confirming the latter in their evil way.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 4, 5 EW 123
- 10 1T 247; 5T 679
- 13 PP 509
- 14 CH 338
- 22 GC 655

CHAPTER 14

1 *God answereth idolaters according to their own heart.* 6 *They are exhorted to repent, for fear of judgments, by means of seduced prophets.* 12 *God's irrevocable sentence of famine,* 15 *of noisome beasts,* 17 *of the sword,* 19 *and of pestilence.* 22 *A remnant shall be reserved for example of others.*

1. Elders of Israel. Probably not to be distinguished from the elders of Judah mentioned in ch. 8:1. The existing nation was becoming known as Israel, though where distinction was intended the designation Judah was retained. The object of inquiry is not mentioned, nor is it even expressly stated that the elders made any inquiry. It appears to have been their custom to sit before the prophet, awaiting any message that might be sent to him from the Lord (see ch. 33:31).

3. Idols. Heb. *gillulim*, a favorite word of Ezekiel (see on ch. 6:4). The LXX has *dianoēmata*, “thoughts [of their hearts],” perhaps to express the yearning after the idolatry of former times. Instructed by the Spirit, the prophet read the hearts of those who sat before him. He was probably not striking at open idolatry among the captives, but rather at the sinful condition and alienation of their hearts.

Stumblingblock. Heb. *mikshol*, “a means [or occasion] of stumbling,” “an obstacle.” Here, the occasion that leads to iniquity.

At all. In the Hebrew the emphatic iteration of the verb makes the question imply a strongly negative answer.

4. That cometh. This is the reading of the text according to Masoretic tradition. The Hebrew text itself is obscure. The Targums read “by myself.” This idea is supported by the form of the verb for “answer,” which may convey the reflexive idea, showing that the Lord will answer by Himself, and not the prophet.

No man can hope fully to know what God would have him do unless his own heart is truly submissive to the divine will. This is because an unregenerate heart, uncontrolled by the Holy Spirit, cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Even if the carnal mind were instructed, it would misunderstand, misapply, and distort, for men believe only what they want to believe. God, who never coerces the human will, permits these self-willed creatures to cling to their delusions (see John 7:17; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

6. Repent. The words for “repent” and “turn” are two different verb forms of the same root, the combination giving emphasis. The announcements of the previous verses form the basis for the earnest call to true repentance. There can be no hope for Israel in any merely outward reformation. The nation has to do with the Searcher of hearts, and the only repentance acceptable to Him is that which reaches down into the innermost recesses of the soul.

Yourselves. A supplied word. According to the context the passage should read, instead, “your faces.”

7. Stranger. Compare Lev. 17:10; 20:1, 2; etc. The resident aliens had shared in the light and privileges entrusted to Israel, and would be judged as equally guilty.

8. A sign. His punishment would be an example that would serve to deter others from a similar course.

9. The prophet. The reference here is to the false prophets whose practices are reproved in ch. 13.

I the Lord. That is, the Lord permits the evil prophet to be deceived in the same sense in which He hardened Pharaoh’s heart, by permitting the seed of obstinacy to spring up and bear fruit (see on Ex. 4:21; 1 Kings 22:22).

Will destroy him. The sinner brings destruction upon himself by his own impenitence (see 5T 120). When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes partly seared, and the next time he is admonished, it is more difficult to yield obedience than before. He is like a man who is sinking under disease, yet refuses medicine. However, in the Scriptures, God, the physician, is often represented, in figure, as sending also the results of the disease upon those who refuse His remedy. For example, He is represented as sending a lying spirit into the mouth of the prophets that they might counsel a king to undertake the wrong course he was already determined to pursue (1 Kings 22:19–23). Thus also when Saul’s

heart became alienated from God and the “Spirit of the Lord departed from” him, the evil spirit, which came instead, is said to have come “from the Lord” (1 Sam. 16:14).

However, this must not be taken to mean that God can ever be the author of sin and deceit. But in His plan He simply does not work the miracle that would be required to prevent the results of sin. From the heart that rejects Him, He withdraws His Spirit, gives up that soul to its own delusions, and permits sin to bring forth its inevitable fruitage, death. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help” (Hosea 13:9 GC 36, 37; see on 2 Chron. 22:8).

10. *Even as.* The false prophets and those who inquire of them had participated mutually and were held alike guilty.

11. *May go no more astray.* A ray of hope in the dark night of apostasy—the people of God walking once more in truth. The object of the discipline may be here discerned, namely, that Israel may be brought to true repentance, be reunited, and restored to its former privileges.

13. *The land.* Literally, “a land.” The whole verse may be included in the supposition: “When a land sinneth ... and I stretch out ... and break the staff ... and send famine ... and cut off.”

The present communication seems to be directed against a belief current among the people that Jerusalem would be spared for the sake of the righteous in it as Sodom and Gomorrah would have been.

14. *Noah, Daniel, and Job.* These men were all examples of true righteousness of life. They were upright in their generation (see Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1; Dan. 1:8; 6:22). The fact that Daniel is named before Job does not warrant the conjecture that some earlier Daniel is meant, as is suggested by many modern scholars who think that Ezekiel refers to the *Dan’el* of the Ugaritic texts. These texts speak of *Dan’el* as a righteous king of the dim past who pleaded the case of widows and orphans. The prophet was simply not concerned with chronological order.

Significantly all three of these men had been the means of saving others. For Noah’s sake his whole family had been spared (Gen. 6:18). Daniel was the means of saving his companions (Dan. 2:18). Job averted the punishment of his friends by his intercession (Job 42:7, 8). Though effective in saving some, they had been powerless to save the generation in which they lived. Noah was unable to save the wicked race before the Flood, and Daniel, though holding high rank in the Babylonian court, had presumably not been able to influence Nebuchadnezzar to spare the people of Judah and their capital city. If the Jews were placing any hope in the position and influence of Daniel, that hope was now dashed. Compare Jer. 15:1.

15. *Noisome.* Heb. *ra’ah*, “evil.”

16. *These three men.* The declaration of v. 14 is repeated here and in vs. 18, 20 with only slight variations in the wording. On the four judgments of vs. 13, 15, 17, 19, see Lev. 26:22, 25, 26.

21. *Four sore judgments.* In the event of any one of the four punishments enumerated, the presence of righteous men would have been powerless to avert the doom; how much less when all these judgments would fall upon Jerusalem.

22. *Ye shall be comforted.* When those in exile would observe the ways and doings of those who had recently arrived, they would know that God had not done without cause what He had done in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the changed attitude on the part of

some of these escapees who might give evidence of repentance (see v. 11) would help the captives to see that God's judgments had been disciplinary and not vindictive.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3, 4 5T 164

3-52T 444

14, 16 AH 298; MH 453; 5T 215, 338; 8T 314

20 COL 412; GC 622

CHAPTER 15

1 *By the unfitness of the vine branch for any work 6 is shewed the rejection of Jerusalem.*

1. The word of the Lord. Chapter 15 is a short poem that may be entitled "The Allegory of the Vine."

2. What is the vine tree? In ch. 14 the prophet has declared that God will not spare Jerusalem for the sake of the few righteous therein. Now he sweeps away another refuge in which the people apparently trusted. His parable teaches that Israel has no native superiority over other nations. The people are not to rest their confidence in the fact that they have been especially elected by God, for they are no longer a true vine, but mere wood, the most useless of all wood, fit only for fuel. The Scriptures frequently compare Israel to a vine or to a vineyard (see Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Matt. 21:33-41; etc.). Some commentators think a wild vine is here represented.

4. Is it meet? For timber the vine is confessedly worthless. If in its perfect state it could not be put to any useful purpose, how much less when it is partially scorched and consumed?

6. So will I give. Representing the present condition of Judea. Its extremities were consumed by the ravages of a foreign enemy, and the midst of it, where the capital city stood, was ready to be destroyed. The Jews, having utterly failed to answer the divine purpose in their selection as witnesses for Jehovah, were to be completely broken as a nation.

7. From one fire. The sentence reads literally, "They shall go from the fire and the fire shall devour them." This effectively describes the condition of Israel. The nation had already been consumed at both ends, the middle had been scorched, and was soon to be given up to the fire.

CHAPTER 16

1 *Under the similitude of a wretched infant is shewed the natural state of Jerusalem. 6 God's extraordinary love towards her. 15 Her monstrous whoredom. 35 Her grievous judgment. 44 Her sin, matching her mother, and exceeding her sisters, Sodom and Samaria, calleth for judgments. 60 Mercy is promised her in the end.*

1. The word of the Lord. By means of a realistic allegory Jerusalem is caused "to know her abominations" (v. 2). Some of the language employed in the allegory is repellent to the modern reader. Men do not speak as forthrightly today. Those whom Ezekiel addressed were accustomed to such speech, and experienced no shock.

3. An Amorite ... Hittite. The significance of these clauses has, until recent years, remained somewhat of a mystery. However, archeological discoveries over many decades have thrown an abundance of light on the early history of the land of Palestine. It is now known that the Amorites were very early inhabitants of that region, and that the infiltrating Hittites from the north occupied some areas of Palestine before the Hebrews settled the land. Among the various peoples of Canaan were the Jebusites, who lived in

the ancient city of Jebus, situated on part of the territory later the site of Jerusalem. Early pre-Israelite kings of Jerusalem had Amorite and Hittite names. This ethnic background was Jerusalem's nativity. Ezekiel's language is a strong taunt to the people of Jerusalem, who boasted descent from Abraham, but who acted as if descended from the earlier heathen inhabitants of what was afterward the land of Israel. Resemblance in character was of transcendent importance compared with mere lineal descent (see John 8:44).

4. As for thy nativity. Verses 4, 5 describe a child cast out into a field following its birth, a frequent heathen practice. Left to itself, the child would soon have perished. The cutting of the umbilical cord was necessary for independent life. Instead of "supple" we should read "cleanse." According to ancient custom the newborn infant was rubbed with salt after the washing. The ancients seemed to think this would make the skin firmer and drier and cleanse it more thoroughly. Salt was also regarded as having a preservative property. The practice of wrapping the body tightly in swaddling clothes is referred to in Luke 2:7. What period in Israel's history is represented by this parable? Probably the time of sojourn in Egypt, where Israel, as a nation, was born.

6. Live. God is represented as a traveler, who, on passing by, discovers the unsightly and pitiable object. Notwithstanding its pollution, He takes pity on it and saves its life. In this helpless and miserable condition God found the Hebrews in the land of bondage. By cruel oppression and by the slaughter of male infants the Egyptians sought to prevent the children of Israel from becoming more and mightier than they (Ex. 1:9–14). But God blessed His people, and, despite hard bondage, they "waxed very mighty" (Ex. 1:20).

7. I have caused thee. The LXX and Syriac versions have an imperative here, "grow up like a plant in the field." The other verbs are better translated, "thou didst increase and wax tall ... and came to beauty ... were fashioned ... was grown."

Excellent ornaments. Literally, "ornament of ornaments," an obscure phrase. The Syriac reads "into the menses," indicating, as does the reading of the RSV, that the foundling had now "arrived at full maidenhood."

8. I passed by. This visit is distinguished from the one in Israel's infancy in Egypt when God blessed and multiplied her. She has now come to a marriageable age, and the Lord betroths her unto Himself (see Jer. 2:2).

Spread my skirt. Signifying the intent to confer upon the maiden the honor of marriage (see on Deut. 22:30; Ruth 3:9). The obvious reference is to the solemn transaction at Sinai, when Jehovah entered into covenant with the Hebrews, who pledged themselves to love, worship, and obey Him to the exclusion of every rival god (Ex. 19:1–9; 24:1–8).

9. Washed I thee. The "washing" and the "anointing" were a part of the preparations for marriage (see Ruth 3:3; Esther 2:12).

10. Brodered work. Heb. *riqmah*, thought to represent a garment of many colors. The daughter of the king described in Ps. 45:14 was decked in *reqamoth* (see comment there).

Badgers skin. Heb. *tachash*. The word occurs elsewhere in the OT only in the Pentateuch (on the meaning, see on Ex. 25:5; 26:14; etc.).

Silk. Heb. *meshi*, a word occurring in the OT only here and in v. 13. It is doubtful whether the reference is to silk. However, the material cannot be identified. Ezekiel speaks of materials and articles of clothing familiar in his day, but our incomplete

knowledge of his times shrouds some of his imagery in mystery, yet not so as to obscure any essential truth.

11. Ornaments. The picture is Oriental, and sets forth the adornment of a royal Eastern bride. On “bracelets” see Gen. 24:22, 30; Num. 31:50; Eze. 23:42. On “chain” see Gen. 41:42.

12. A jewel. Heb. *nezem*, properly a “ring,” and so translated in Gen. 24:47. The phrase reads literally, “a nose ring on thy nostril.” In Isa. 3:21 the same combination of words is translated “nose jewels.” Some think the reference may be to jewels set in the side of the nose, such as are commonly worn in the East today.

The question may be raised: Should one find in this passage a sanction for indulgence in such luxury today, for was it not God Himself who thus profusely decked this maid? The answer is No. First of all, the incident is figurative, and the imagery is borrowed from a contemporary situation. A parallel situation is that of Jesus using the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which centered around an utterly false dogma as far as the intermediate state is concerned (see COL 263). Furthermore, things sanctioned, or at least permitted, under the lesser illumination of the OT are often, under the greater light of the gospel age, no longer sanctioned. Typical examples are polygamy and easy divorce (see on Deut. 14:26). Jewelry and extravagant dress for Christian women are spoken against (1 Tim 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4).

13. Thou dost prosper. Probably a reference to the time of David and Solomon, when the kingdom of Israel extended from the Euphrates to the “border of Egypt” (see on 1 Kings 4:21), and many of the surrounding kingdoms were tributary. This period was the golden age of Israel.

14. Which I had put. people are reminded that their prosperity and glory were not because of any merit of their own. They owed all they enjoyed to God.

15. Trust in thine own beauty. A striking fulfillment of Deut. 32:15; cf. Hosea 13:6. Raised to the pinnacle of glory under Solomon’s early beneficent reign, Israel began to trust in her greatness and prosperity. Losing sight of God’s high destiny for the Hebrews, Solomon set to work to make Israel a great and powerful empire among the nations of the earth. To do this he entered into foreign contracts and alliances directly contrary to the express command of God. Apparently greatly benefited by his treaty with the king of Egypt, which he sealed by his marriage to Pharaoh’s daughter, he entered into other similar agreements with other nations. But the deception was fatal. His multitude of wives introduced idolatry into his realm, until king and subject alike bowed to foreign gods. Thus the very means Solomon employed to aggrandize his empire were the means of its fall. The enormous taxes levied to sustain the magnificence of the realm became the pretext for revolt. The empire outside of Palestine fell apart and the kingdom itself was divided.

Playedst the harlot. A metaphor to describe foreign alliances for political advantages, which God had emphatically forbidden (Deut. 7:2; Judges 2:2), or to describe the substitution of any form of worship for that of the true God. The figure is common in the Scriptures (see Ex. 34:15, 16; Lev. 17:7; Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:17; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 2:20; James 4:4). The various alliances with the heathen that Solomon initiated and the subsequent adoption of the idolatrous worship of these nations are here referred to.

16. High places. Heb. *bamoth* (see on ch. 6:3).

Shall not come. The meaning of the last clause of this verse is obscure. The clause reads literally, “not to come and not shall be.” Perhaps the RSV expresses the intended sense in its reading, “the like has never been, nor ever shall be.”

17. Which I had given. Verses 17–19 bring the charge against Israel that the people had bestowed upon others the gifts given them by God. In His parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), Jesus emphasized the seriousness of devoting to selfish purposes entrusted talents. God has assigned to every man his work—a special work in a specially designated place. He has equipped each with special capabilities to accomplish that task. Many take the gifts lent them—the gifts of health, of intellect, of wealth, of time—and pervert them to utterly selfish ends! Such are as guilty and as censurable as was idolatrous Israel. Every one ought earnestly to inquire, “Am I doing the work God has assigned me?”

Many hold a distorted view of success. In their thinking, only men of certain ranks and accomplishments have attained success. Such is not Heaven’s definition. In the eyes of God any man is accounted successful only as he adequately fulfills the peculiar office assigned him by Heaven. That office may be very humble and the task menial, but the reward is in no wise diminished.

Images of men. Possibly images of Baal.

20. Hast thou sacrificed. A reference to Molech worship, a feature of the later idolatries of Israel (2 Kings 16:3; Ps. 106:37; Isa. 57:5; Jer. 7:31, 32). In this form of worship children were sacrificed as burnt offerings (see p. 391), an unnatural and terrible crime (see on Lev. 18:21; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 16:3).

22. Hast not remembered. Israel is here charged with the sin of base ingratitude. The nation had enjoyed every privilege and had been exalted to heaven in its advantages. God had overlooked nothing that would help to assure its success. Through an earlier prophet He had declared, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” (Isa. 5:4).

The Bible is replete with other instances of ingratitude. Crowning the list is Adam’s gross example of ungratefulness. He, too, possessed every advantage. How he, a holy being, could become so unappreciative as to transgress against the God who had planned only for his good, will remain forever a mystery. Human history will close with a record of ingratitude. In the last days men will be “unthankful” (2 Tim. 3:1–5). Christians should beware lest they become too sparing in giving thanks. A far greater proportion of their prayers ought to be devoted to praising Him from whom all blessings flow.

23. All thy wickedness. Up to this point Ezekiel had dealt with Canaanite forms of idolatry. He begins now to condemn more distant foreign alliances and idolatries.

24. An eminent place. Heb. *gab*, explained by some commentators as something arched or rounded, hence, perhaps a vault. However, reliefs from Asshur seem to indicate that a certain raised platform in front of an altar is meant, on which ritual sexual intercourse was carried on. The LXX reads *oikēma pornikon*, “brothel house.” In many ancient forms of worship prostitution assumed a quasi-religious character.

26. Egyptians. Some think there is a reference here to the licentious character of the Egyptian worship. Israel repeatedly sought affinity with Egypt, especially so in the latter part of the monarchy (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 10:28; 2 Kings 17:4; 18:21; Isa. 30:1–5; 31:1–3; 36:6; Hosea 7:11). At this very time part of the work of Jeremiah was to oppose the

tendency to form an alliance with Egypt (see Jer. 37:5, 7). Political and commercial alliances are here represented under the figure of whoredom (see Isa. 23:17; Nahum 3:4).

Great of flesh. A crude figure of the power of Egypt and the strength of Egypt's soldiers. Compare ch. 23:20.

27. Diminished thine ordinary food. God designed that this should be a disciplinary measure to bring the unfaithful wife to a consciousness of her sin. Men are so prone to forget that all temporal blessings come from God. He causes His sun to shine on both the righteous and the wicked. By His power immediately exercised, every seed springs into life, and the earth yields her bounties for the sustenance of man. God wishes that by a removal of these benefits men will be reminded of their utter dependence upon Him.

Philistines. From the time of the judges the Philistines had been persistent enemies of Israel. They were subdued by David, but became troublesome again during the period of the later kings (2 Kings 18:8; 2 Chron. 26:7; 28:18). They were frequently the subject of prophetic utterances (Isa. 9:12; Jer. 25:20; 47:1, 4; Eze. 25:15, 16; Amos 1:6–8; 3:9; Obadiah 19; Zeph. 2:5; Zech. 9:6).

Ashamed. The figure is probably based on the idea that the Philistines had at least adhered to their gods and had not exchanged them for others as Israel had done (see Jer. 2:10, 11).

28. Assyrians. Overtures to Assyria were made both by Judah (2 Kings 16:7) and by Israel (Hosea 5:13).

29. Canaan. Heb. *kena'an*. Here it is probably not used as a proper name but in its secondary sense of "traffic," or "commerce" (see Isa. 23:8, where *kena'an* is translated "traffickers"; cf. Hosea 12:7; Zeph. 1:11). In Eze. 17:4 *kenaan* is applied in this sense to Babylon. The complete phrase may be translated, "unto commercial Babylon," or, "unto a land of trade, Chaldea." Babylon closes the list of nations with whom Israel had played the harlot.

30. How weak. An exclamation decrying the sickly craving of lustful desire. Oft repeated sins weaken the moral nature until the powers of the will are destroyed. Man is then a slave of his lust. The gospel of Jesus Christ is fully potent to transform such sin-hardened hearts. By man's permitting divine power to enter the life, the weakened will can once more be strengthened and the moral fiber built up.

31. Eminent place. See on v. 24.

Scornest hire. Usually a harlot receives hire, but Israel gave gifts to her lovers, contrary to the customary procedure (vs. 31–34). Strategically situated on the great highway between the rival nations of Egypt and Assyria, Israel might appropriately have demanded a price for her friendship. Instead, she paid a heavy price for the aid of these nations. She thus purchased her ruin (see 2 Kings 16:8, 9; cf. Hosea 12:1).

35. Hear the word. From the task of pointing out the sin of Judah, the prophet now turns to the pronouncement of the punishment. The same figurative language is continued.

36. Filthiness. Heb. *nechosheth*, according to some authorities derived from the Akkadian *nuḫshu*, "abundance," in a derogatory sense, "extravagance." Others derive *nechosheth* from the Akkadian *naḫshatu*, "menstruation," for which "filthiness" is a euphemism.

Blood of thy children. Infanticide in Molech worship (see on v. 20).

37. All thy lovers. That is, the surrounding nations with whom Israel had allied herself.

38. Break wedlock. Under ancient Jewish law the penalty for murder, adultery, and sacrificing to Molech was death (Ex. 21:12; Lev. 20:1–5, 10). Capital punishment was by stoning (see Lev. 20:2; cf. John 8:5). The charge of blood may here extend beyond infanticide in connection with the sacrifices to Molech to include other crimes, assassinations, and judicial murders.

39. Eminent place. See on v. 24.

40. Stone thee. The mode of capital punishment for adultery (see on v. 38). According to the rule the punishment was executed by the congregation (Num. 15:36), or by the men of the city (Lev. 20:2). In this case the “congregation,” or “company,” is the army of the Chaldeans.

41. Burn thine houses. See 2 Kings 25:9 and Jer. 52:13 for the literal fulfillment of this prediction. There is a blending here of the figurative and the literal; the house of the adulteress shall be destroyed, and the houses of Jerusalem shall be burned.

Many women. The heathen nations, according to the analogy of Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife.

42. To rest. The figure is that of a jealous husband completing his punishment of his adulterous wife. The retribution exhausts itself as a fire goes out after it has consumed the fuel. As the sequel indicates (vs. 53, 60–63), the judgments would not be final, but the retribution would prove to be corrective.

43. Hast fretted. Heb. *ragaz*, here probably meaning “to rage against.”

44. As is the mother. An example of the tendency of the Eastern mind to express experiences of life in the form of short, pithy sayings. Our modern counterpart to the proverb is, “Like father, like son.” The taunt of the proverb is that Israel, despite her boasted pride of superior ancestry, is actually no better than her Hittite predecessors (see on v. 3).

45. Which loathed their husbands. The identification of these husbands is obscure. Some have conjectured that God here represents Himself as the husband, not only of Israel, but also of the other nations. In their case also idolatry would be apostasy from God, who had given to them a revelation of Himself. God is a God of all the world and not of Israel only. He claims the allegiance of all mankind, first because He created man, and second because He has given to all a measure of revelation sufficient for intelligent worship. Jesus is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9; cf. Rom. 1:20; Acts 14:17).

46. Elder sister. Chronologically Sodom was not younger than Jerusalem, nor was Samaria older. The assignment of the respective ages of the two sisters is probably to be accounted for by the fact that the words for “elder” and “younger” are literally, “greater” and “smaller.” Samaria is called the “elder” because the northern kingdom was larger and stronger; and Sodom, the “younger” because it had a comparatively small population.

Left hand. That is, “north.” The Orientals described geographical positions from the standpoint of facing the east. Hence Samaria, being to the north, was at the left.

Right hand. Sodom to the south was on the right. Poetically, it is represented as still in existence.

47. *A very little thing.* Heb. *me'at qat*. The first Hebrew word means "little," or "small"; the second is of doubtful derivation. Some compare it with the Ethiopian *quaṭit*, "small." The word "thing" is supplied. If correctly so, the passage could mean, "nor done after their abominations a little only, but hast done more corruptly than they." The Hebrew phrase may also mean "a little time." The idea would then be, "not done after their abominations, but in a little while you did more corruptly than they."

The greater sin would have to be understood in the sense of greater guilt because of greater opportunity. This was Christ's thought when He upbraided the faithlessness of the people of His day, declaring, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:15). They sin most who sin against the greatest light. The most fearful retribution comes upon those who have had the greatest opportunities but have abused the mercies of God and slighted the divine warnings. The accumulated light of the ages shines in our day. Men who neglect today's blessings and opportunities bring upon themselves greater guilt than men in any previous age. The wrath of God in the seven last plagues is reserved for those who decide against Christ in the day of greatest illumination, when the third angel's message swells into the loud cry and the whole earth is lightened with the glory of God (Rev. 18:1–4). Sinners of earlier ages suffer only the wrath that comes after the millennium.

49. *Pride.* The prophet does not point out the unnatural crimes that are commonly associated with the name of Sodom. He seems to strike rather at the causes than at outward acts. Prosperity always proves dangerous to virtue, and idleness leads to temptation and to every sin. Moses had forewarned Israel against these dangers (Deut. 6:10–12; cf. Jer. 22:21; Hosea 13:6). The category of sins includes a negative one; "neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Men are usually concerned about sins of commission. But it is as easy to miss heaven by sins of omission. In the parable Jesus bids those on His left hand depart, not because of gross outward sins, but because of the neglect of simple ministrations of love (Matt. 25:41–46). This teaching is in harmony with the statement of the apostle, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

The sins of Samaria are not mentioned, probably because her abominations were of such recent date as to require no mention, whereas the history of Sodom had closed more than a millennium before.

50. *As I saw good.* There is nothing in the Hebrew text corresponding to the word "good." The word should either be omitted or "it" be supplied. The clause would then be translated "according to what I saw," or "according as I saw it." God first makes an inspection (see Gen. 18:21) and then punishes according to works. This work is analogous to the final judgment, when a careful investigation will be made of the records of all men before the rewards and punishments are assigned (2 Cor. 5:10).

51. *Justified thy sisters.* This phrase should be understood comparatively. Compared with Judah, Sodom and Samaria appeared innocent, though they were not, of course, thereby acquitted. Men often seek to justify their own imperfect course by comparing themselves with others who, they assert, are more sinful than they. Such a course leads to ruin. They should compare themselves with only one standard, namely, the spotless character of Christ.

53. *Bring again their captivity.* Literally, "turn the captivity," here figuratively a return to the former state, as no carrying away took place in the case of Sodom. This text

presents a problem in that Sodom and her daughters (the surrounding cities) had perished with all their inhabitants many ages ago, leaving no descendants (Gen. 19:25; Jude 7). How, then, could a restoration be accomplished? Possibly Sodom is here used symbolically of the surrounding peoples, such as the Ammonites and Moabites, the descendants of Lot, the survivor of Sodom. God's plan of salvation embraces all nations. But the language is highly figurative, and the purpose of the comparison is "to provoke them [the Jews] to jealousy" (Rom. 11:11). In the restoration Judah is shown as occupying third place.

54. *Art a comfort.* The fact that these sisters whom Jerusalem had despised were to share in the restoration would be an occasion for further humiliation.

55. *When.* Better, "and," the Hebrew having only the simple conjunction. Sodom and Samaria are mentioned first, not from the standpoint of chronology, that they would experience an earlier return, if a literal application is intended (see on v. 53), but from the standpoint of the argument that their mention might provoke arrogant Judah to repentance.

56. *Mentioned.* Literally, "for a report," here probably in the sense of a reproach or a byword. The statement is probably interrogative, "Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth (RSV)?"

57. *Thy reproach.* The pronoun is not in the Hebrew. Read simply, "the reproach."

Syria. A number of manuscripts and the Syriac read "Edom." The two names are very similar in the Hebrew script (see on 2 Sam. 8:12). The passage may refer to Judah's exultation at the misfortunes of Syria or Edom.

59. *Breaking the covenant.* Israel had broken the covenant made at Sinai, in which God offered the people the privilege of being His "peculiar treasure" (Ex. 19:5). They were to be the depositaries of the sacred oracles and were to spread abroad the knowledge of God's law, first through a demonstration of the truth in their lives, and second through active missionary propaganda. In both of these they hopelessly failed. See pp. 30–33.

60. *An everlasting covenant.* Though Israel had faithlessly broken the covenant, her unfaithfulness could not alter the faithfulness of God. He was willing to enter into new covenant relationship in the day of repentance. Unfortunately, because of the continued faithlessness of the remnant, the fulfillment was delayed until the gospel era, when the permanence of the covenant was assured in that it no longer rested upon a national basis, but upon an individual basis. Nevertheless, the greater permanence offered at the time of the return of the exiles was never accepted.

The Bible presents two basic covenants, the everlasting (which later became known as the new) and the old. A failure properly to define the term "covenant" and correctly to distinguish between the old and the new covenants has given rise to much misunderstanding. The everlasting covenant is simply God's arrangement for the salvation of the human race. The expression is, for practical purposes, synonymous with the term "the plan of redemption." This covenant was made with Adam in Eden and later renewed to Abraham (see PP 370). It represented the setting into operation of a plan whereby man might be restored to the position he had lost. Man needed pardon for his transgression. Forgiveness became possible through the work that the Son of God was to do in His incarnation, life, and death. Man's character needed to be brought back into harmony with the divine image. Divine power was promised, which, when accepted by

man, would expel sin from the life and incorporate the righteous character traits into the soul.

This covenant, or arrangement, for salvation was made with Adam, but it applies equally to men in all ages. In NT times this same covenant became known as the new covenant, simply because its validation by the sacrifice of Christ came after the validation of the old covenant, which occurred at Sinai.

The old covenant was made at Sinai. Why was this covenant necessary when an adequate arrangement for salvation was already in existence? The old covenant was never intended to take the place of the everlasting covenant; neither was it designed to be an alternative means of salvation. An examination of the historical background will help to clarify its objective. In their slavery in Egypt the Israelites had, to a large extent, lost their knowledge of God and of His requirements. Their reeducation would require time. Spiritual truth is only gradually comprehended. The acquirement of one truth makes possible the acquisition of another. God began His instruction at Sinai by informing the people that the objective of His plan was to bring their lives into harmony with His character. However, the purpose was stated objectively, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6). At the time the Israelites understood little of what was involved. They agreed to the broad statement of the objectives and replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). It was God's plan to go from here and instruct the people as to how these objectives could be achieved. Gradually, as they would be able to comprehend, He would unfold to them all the details of the everlasting covenant (see EGW, Supplementary Material, on Ex. 19:3–8).

Unfortunately the people never seemed to progress beyond the first lesson in their spiritual instruction. They grasped the idea of the necessity of obedience. Such a philosophy they had learned in Egypt. Hence, they sought the favor of God by endeavoring to render an outward obedience to the divine requirements. All attempts by God to show the necessity of a new heart, and of divine grace to render such obedience possible, met with repeated failure. Save for individual exceptions such an attitude continued throughout the whole OT period, and this despite repeated appeals by the prophets to accept the higher relationship. On the new covenant see Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:8–13; PP 370–373.

61. *Be ashamed.* Judah would be humbled and instructed through her misfortunes and be led at last to grasp the purposes of God.

Elder. In the Hebrew the adjectives here translated "elder" and "younger" are in the plural, showing not only that Samaria and Sodom are meant, but that all nations that would accept the new-covenant relationship are now included.

Thy covenant. Probably here Judah's misinterpretation of God's original covenant, which the Lord designed should embrace the world, but from whose benefits the Jews excluded all other nations.

63. *Thou mayest remember.* The pardon that God gives does not blot out the memory of the sinful past. The shame that accompanies such a memory is the necessary safeguard of the new experience. Such knowledge also constantly keeps in mind the magnitude of salvation. Compare PK 78.

When I am pacified. Heb. *bekapperi*, “when I forgive,” from the root *kaphar*, used technically in the OT for “atonement.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

8, 13–15GC 381

32 GC 382

49 CG 466; CH 629; CT 279; Ed 209; 1T 395; 2T 371; 5T 232

49, 50 PP 156; 4T 96

62, 63 COL 161

CHAPTER 17

1 *Under the parable of two eagles and a vine, 11 is shewed God’s judgment upon Jerusalem for revolting from Babylon to Egypt. 22 God promiseth to plant the cedar of the gospel.*

1. The word of the Lord. Another distinct communication, yet belonging to the same series of prophecies that began with the vision of chs. 8–11. Verses 12–24 enable us to determine the occasion and to fix the date of the prophecy as the time when Zedekiah was seeking Egyptian aid against Nebuchadnezzar.

2. Riddle. Heb. *chidah*, an enigmatic saying, translated “dark saying” in Ps. 49:4; 78:2. These passages couple the words for “riddle” and “parable” as does Ezekiel’s passage.

3. A great eagle. Literally, “the great eagle.” According to v. 12 the symbol represents “the king of Babylon” (cf. Jer. 48:40; 49:22).

Lebanon. Here poetically representing Judah. Perhaps the fact that one of Solomon’s palaces was called the “house of the forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 7:2; 10:17, 21) suggested the symbolism here.

The highest branch. Heb. *šammereth*, a word occurring in the Bible only here, in v. 22, and in ch. 31:3, 10, 14. Its etymology is uncertain, but it presumably means the top of the tree. The reference is to Jehoiachin, whom Nebuchadnezzar took captive to Babylon (2 Kings 24:12).

4. Traffick. Heb. *kena’an*, generally transliterated “Canaan,” but here used in its secondary sense of merchandise (see on ch. 16:29). The “land of traffick” represents Babylon (ch. 17:12).

5. The seed of the land. This was Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar made king in Jehoiachin’s place. Jehoiachin was removed, possibly because of his pro-Egyptian leanings. It was hoped that Zedekiah, a vassal of Babylon, would remain faithful to his overlord.

6. A spreading vine. The Jewish state under Zedekiah was permitted to become a fruitful and prosperous though dependent kingdom. Zedekiah had sworn to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar’s suzerainty (2 Chron. 36:13). Nebuchadnezzar doubtless hoped that Israel as a flourishing kingdom might serve as a sort of buffer state between him and the imperialistically-minded nation of Egypt.

7. Another great eagle. Hophra, of Egypt, also called Apries (v. 15; cf. Jer. 44:30).

Toward him. Although Zedekiah had sworn allegiance to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:13; cf. Eze. 17:14), he treacherously sought the aid of Egypt. Jeremiah endeavored to dissuade Zedekiah from this Egyptian alliance (Jer. 37:7).

9. *Shall it prosper?* A negative answer is implied. The overtures to Egypt would result in the total destruction of Judah.

10. *East wind.* An appropriate symbol of the Babylonians, who dwelt to the east of Palestine. The east wind is noted for its blasting and destructive effect on plants (Job 27:21; Eze. 19:12; Hosea 13:15; Jonah 4:8).

11. *Moreover.* This form of expression suggests that there was probably an interval before the explanation of the parable was given. During this time the parable was to be a riddle to the people, arousing their curiosity and causing them to be more attentive when the prophet would expound its meaning to them. Truth always finds a more fruitful field in an inquiring mind.

12. *What these things mean.* The prophet gives a formal interpretation of the parable (vs. 12–17). “The rebellious house” doubtless included those among the exiles at Tell-abib who hoped for the success of the Egyptian alliance and the resultant downfall of the power of Babylon.

Is come. Better, “came.” The verbs following (vs. 12, 13) should also be translated by the simple past. On the interpretation see on vs. 3–10.

15. *Horses.* From the Eighteenth Dynasty onward chariots were standard military equipment of the Egyptian armies (see on Ex. 14:7; 1 Kings 10:28, 29; cf. 2 Chron. 12:2, 3; Isa. 31:1; 36:9).

Shall he escape? The perfidy of Zedekiah in violating the worn covenant of fealty, in addition to his other great wickedness, could not be overlooked. On the sanctity of an oath see Joshua 9; 2 Sam. 21:1, 2.

16. *He shall die.* See on Eze. 12:13.

17. *Make for him.* That is, accomplish anything of advantage, or be of service to him. A suggested correction of the text makes the phrase read “save him.”

By casting up mounts. Better, “when they cast up mounts,” that is, the Chaldeans. As it reads, the text implies that the casting up of siege mounds (see on ch. 4:2) and the building of forts were done by Pharaoh.

18. *Given his hand.* That is, as a pledge.

19. *Mine oath.* The Lord designates the oath and covenant to Nebuchadnezzar as His, doubtless because made in His name (2 Chron. 36:13). Furthermore, as the arbiter of history, the Lord planned that the Jews should at this time submit themselves to the yoke of Babylon (Jer. 27:12).

20. *Spread my net.* This verse is almost identical, in the first part, with ch. 12:13. See comments there.

22. *I will also take.* A promise of future restoration. Jehovah Himself will interpose and take a branch of the cedar and plant it upon the “mountain of the height of Israel.” The prediction is obviously concerning the Messiah.

Mountain. See Eze. 20:40; cf. Isa. 2:2–4; Micah 4:1–3.

23. *All fowl of every wing.* Representing the earth’s varied inhabitants (cf. Matt. 13:32), men of “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Through a remnant God planned to accomplish His original design in the call of Israel. Religious instruction was to go out from Zion, and the spiritual kingdom to extend throughout the whole world. The failure of the remnant of Israel made necessary the call to the Christian church (see 1 Peter 2:9; cf. Deut. 10:15). Its members, gathered from every nation, kindred,

tongue, and people, were to constitute the new nation through which God would evangelize the world (Matt. 21:33–46).

24. *All the trees.* That is, the surrounding nations. These would witness the restoration of the nation of Israel and would acknowledge that all power is of God, who is silently, patiently working out the purposes of His will. To every nation and individual God has assigned a task. All are permitted to occupy a place on earth to see whether they will fulfill the divine purpose (see Ed 178; PK 535, 536).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

15–18PK 451

22, 23 PK 599

CHAPTER 18

1 *God reproveth the unjust parable of sour grapes. 5 He sheweth how he dealeth with a just father: 10 with a wicked son of a just father: 14 with a just son of a wicked father: 19 with a wicked man repenting: 24 with a just man revolting. 25 He defendeth his justice, 31 and exhorteth to repentance.*

1. *The word of the Lord.* A new section opens, which deals with the responsibility of the individual. Ezekiel had repeatedly emphasized the certainty of the coming judgments, hoping thereby to lead the people to repentance. But this salutary purpose was frustrated by the manner in which these judgments were interpreted. The people considered that they were innocent children suffering for the iniquity of their fathers and that consequently repentance was needless and useless. They were not inclined to acknowledge their personal guilt or recognize their individual responsibility.

2. *Ye use this proverb.* The fact that it was termed a “proverb” indicates that the saying was popular. The tense of the Hebrew verb shows that the words were oft repeated. Jeremiah referred to and condemned the same proverb (Jer. 31:29, 30). The sour grapes the fathers ate represented their own personal sins. The setting of the children’s teeth on edge represented the suffering the Jews felt came upon them in consequence of their fathers’ sins. On the surface it may appear that this proverb is in harmony with what is expressly stated in the second commandment, that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children (Ex. 20:5; Ex. 34:7; Deut. 5:9). Then why should Ezekiel so strongly condemn it? Ezekiel’s statement and the statement in the law deal with two different aspects of the problem. Ezekiel’s contemporaries insisted that they suffered for their fathers’ guilt. The law deals with the handing down of depravity. “It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrong-doing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins” (PP 306).

Sin depraved and degraded the nature of Adam and Eve. It was impossible for the parents of the human race to pass on to their posterity that which they themselves did not possess (see GC 533). Hence, we, as their offspring, suffer the result of the transgression of our forefathers, but not through any arbitrary imputation of their guilt. If the latter were true, the charge of unfairness could be sustained. But in the former case, the element of unfairness is eliminated by the observation that the only alternative course would have been the annihilation of the human family at the time of the first sin. The setting into operation of the plan of salvation involved the necessity of perpetuating the lives of our first parents even though such a perpetuation would permit the working out of the law of heredity. However, the situation was fair in view of the fact that the plan of salvation was

instituted, for it provided for ultimate freedom from perverted appetites, debased morals, physical disease and degeneracy, which are transmitted as a legacy from father to son. It provided also victory in this life over hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil. The ultimate salutary effect will be not only the salvation of untold multitudes but eternal immunity against future transgression. Ezekiel's countrymen failed to comprehend this truth and falsely charged God with inflicting upon them the punishment for sin for which they in no wise were responsible.

4. All souls are mine. They are God's by right of creation. All are equally His creatures, and His dealings with them are without prejudice or partiality. He loves and would save all, and punishment ensues only when it is deserved.

The soul that sinneth. Though Ezekiel was speaking primarily of the immediately impending judgments, his words have a wider application. They are equally true of the final, irrevocable second death (Rev. 20:14; cf. Matt. 10:28). God's restored universe will have every vestige of sin removed. No reminders of the curse will remain, such as eternally burning souls in an ever-existing hell. God's triumph over evil will be complete. The idea that the wicked will be granted eternal life, though in torment, is entirely contrary to the Scriptures. This doctrine rests upon the false premise that the soul is a separate entity and is indestructible. But this idea is derived, not from the Scriptures, but from false philosophical concepts that early found their way into Jewish and Christian thinking. The word translated "soul" (*nephesh*) does not refer to any immortal part of man nor even to an animating principle in man. It is equivalent to "man," or "person," or "self." *Nephesh* refers to man as a unique individual, different from every other individual. When this peculiar identity is emphasized, the Scriptures designate man as a "soul." Ezekiel is here declaring, "the person who sins shall die." For a more extended discussion of *nephesh* see on Ps. 16:10.

5. Lawful and right. Compare Micah 6:8.

6. Eaten upon the mountains. That is, eaten sacrificial meals to heathen deities. God severely condemned such participation in heathen feasts (Eze. 16:16; 22:9; cf. Deut. 12:2).

Lifted up his eyes. Probably denoting a hankering after idolatry (see Gen. 19:26; Matt. 5:28–30).

Hath defiled. See Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10.

Come near. See Lev. 18:19; 20:18.

7. His pledge. See Ex. 22:26; Deut. 24:6, 13.

Given his bread. A virtue frequently enjoined and extolled (see Job 31:16–22; Isa. 58:5–7; Matt. 25:34–46; James 1:27; 2:15, 16).

8. Usury. Interest, not only exorbitant, but any amount whatsoever. The Mosaic law prohibited the Jews from taking interest from their brethren who had "waxen poor," but permitted them to take it from a foreigner (see on Ex. 22:25; see Deut. 23:19, 20).

Executed true judgment. See Isa. 33:15; Jer. 7:5; Zech. 7:9. God requires absolute fairness, truthfulness, and integrity of all his children.

9. He shall surely live. Ezekiel doubtless intended these words to apply primarily to temporal prosperity in this present world, but they are equally true of the future immortal life. Eternal life is received when the soul accepts Christ. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47; cf. 1 John 5:11, 12). "Christ became one flesh

with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours” (DA 388).

10. *A robber.* Verses 10–13 describe the case of a son who, instead of following the good example of his pious parent, adopts a course directly opposite, recklessly abandons virtue, and indulges in crime.

14. *Doeth not such like.* Verses 14–18 describe the case of a son who, shocked at his father’s sins, is influenced to shun the wickedness of his parent. Here the father has eaten “sour grapes,” and his son’s teeth were not set on edge (see v. 2). The parable is thus directly contradicted. Each man is to be judged according to his own individual character.

Nevertheless it is true that the son of a righteous man may have certain advantages, and the son of a wicked father certain hindrances, with respect to the formation of a righteous character. However, a man’s responsibility is directly proportioned to privilege (see Luke 12:48). But since the gospel contains the power to overcome hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, the effect of an unfavorable heredity can be canceled, at least so far as the attainment of the requisite character is concerned. And since all have the privilege of receiving the gospel, none can validly offer to the Judge in the last day the excuse implied in the parable of the “sour grapes.” The man who is lost will have but himself to blame for his exclusion from heaven.

19. *Why? doth not the son bear?* Or, “Why doth not the son bear?” The query probably has its source in the fact that the parable seemingly contradicts the teaching of the law, the operations of nature, and popular opinion. Ezekiel does not reason with the human objection, but repeats the law of individual responsibility. In Jewish thinking the individual was regarded as a part of a nation or family. Ezekiel’s new teaching was really a precursor of one of the basic concepts of the new covenant. Under the old covenant (see on ch. 16:60) men believed that salvation was based upon an external connection with the central system of worship. The priest was the interpreter of divine law, and the individual, instead of searching the Scriptures for himself, depended upon the interpretation of the religious leaders. Under the new covenant it is expressly stated, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb. 8:11; cf. Jer. 31:34). All were to have direct access to God. No longer were they to worship at Jerusalem through external ceremony, but they would worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:21–24). God requires justice and mercy toward men and humility toward Him (Micah 6:8).

20. *Soul.* See on v. 4.

21. *If the wicked will turn.* The change in individual character is now considered, first, the case of a wicked man repenting and doing righteousness (vs. 21–23, 27, 28), and second, the case of a righteous man falling into wickedness (vs. 24–26).

22. *Shall not be mentioned.* Ezekiel now becomes a preacher of the gospel. His theme is justification by faith. Sins are no longer mentioned to the sinner, because through repentance and confession they have been completely forgiven. They have all been completely forgiven. They have all been placed upon Jesus, who has become the sinner’s substitute and surety. And the Lord, in return, “places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he

were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son” (EGW RH Nov. 4, 1890). Such are the marvelous provisions of Heaven’s plan. Man is accepted before God as if he had not sinned (see SC 67). Thus, wholly surrendered to God, he need no longer be anxious about what Christ and the Father think of him, but about what God thinks of Christ, man’s substitute (see EGW GCB April 23, 1901, pp. 419–422).

23. *Have I any pleasure?* Compare 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9. The charge that the way of the Lord in His dealings with men is not just and right is answered in the assertion that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that men be converted and live. He has furthermore provided an opportunity for all. It is with the strongest appeal that He pleads with every sinner to disconnect himself from sin, lest he be destroyed with it at last.

24. *Shall not be mentioned.* In the event the righteous man falls away, the book of remembrance, in which all his good deeds were recorded, is not taken into account in the judgment. He is rewarded according to his long category of sins. Not only are sins he has not repented of charged against him, but all those also for which he had earlier obtained pardon. When a man separates himself from God he rejects His pardoning love, and is consequently “in the same condition as before he was forgiven. He has denied his repentance, and his sins are upon him as if he had not repented” (COL 251). It is sometimes erroneously held that when a sin is forgiven it is immediately blotted out. As in the type the blood “removed the sin from the penitent” but left it in “the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement,” so the sins of the penitent “will be blotted from the books of heaven” in the day of judgment (PP 357, 358; see also GC 483–485).

25. *Equal.* Heb. *takan*, “to test,” in the form here found “to be approved,” “to be in order,” “to be right.” The people still insist that God does not work by uniform laws and that His ways are marked by caprice. In reply the prophet reaffirms the equity of the divine judgments (vs. 25–29).

30. *Repent, and turn.* Verses 30–32 constitute an appeal based on the principles of the justice of God’s dealings. When the counsel is given, “Make you a new heart and a new spirit” (v. 31), the prophet does not mean that man can save himself by his own power. But there is a part that man just act in the work of salvation. God can do nothing for man without man’s consent and cooperation (see DA 466). The meaning of repentance is not so clearly expressed by the Hebrew root, *shub*, as it is by the Greek, *metonia*. Nor does the English word always convey all that is bound up in this spiritual experience. The basic idea of *shub* is “to turn.” According to this definition, men turn from their sins (see SC 26). *Metanoia* is built on two words, the first, *meta*, which means “after,” and the second, *nous*, which means “mind.” The resultant meaning is to have a different mind afterward.

Sin has its seat in the mind. The soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason. The root of sin, then, is a bent of mind that causes man to choose the evil course. The solution to the problem is to correct this basic disposition. This is what repentance is intended to accomplish. A change must take place in the thinking of the individual. Since God never coerces the will, this act must be voluntary, but the Holy Spirit is given to aid the soul. It is quite impossible for the individual of himself to accomplish the transformation. But when he chooses to make the change and in his great

need cries out to God, the powers of the soul are imbued with power from above and the propensity of the mind is corrected.

True repentance, then, is a function of the mind. It includes a thorough scrutinizing of the situation to discover what factors led to the defection, and also a study as to how similar errors can be avoided in the future. Repentance is the process whereby sin is expelled from the life. Once repented of, it can be confessed, and it will be forgiven. But confession without repentance is meaningless. God cannot forgive sins that are still active in the heart. This is the reason why the basic emphasis of the Scriptures is upon repentance rather than confession. Jesus' fundamental teaching was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). Peter's counsel was, "Repent, and be baptized" (Acts 2:38).

A proper grasp of the true meaning of repentance in its relationship to confession is essential to a successful spiritual experience. The reason many Christians fall so repeatedly into the same error is that they have never truly permitted the Holy Spirit to change their basic thinking with regard to that sin; they have never taken their sins to heart, to discover how, by the enabling grace of God, they might have complete victory over those sins.

Shall not be your ruin. Israel charged that God was unjust and caused their ruin. God declared that sin itself, which the sinner voluntarily chose, was their ruin (see 5T 120). He may not acknowledge the justice of God's ways now; but in that awful moment, when he conforms the Judge of all the earth, there will be heard from his lips the acknowledgment that God's ways are just (see GC 668, 669).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4, 20 EW 51; FE 197; GC 533; LS 48; SR 388; 1T 39, 530

23 PK 127; 5T 631

24 GC 483

25 5T 631

25, 26 COL 251

30-325T 631

31 2T 225

31, 32 PK 127

32 SC 58

CHAPTER 19

1 *A lamentation for the princes of Israel, under the parable of lions' whelps taken in a pit, 10 and for Jerusalem, under the parable of a wasted vine.*

1. Lamentation. Heb. *qinah*, "a song of mourning," "a dirge," or "an elegy" (see Vol. III, p. 19).

Princes. Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin (see on vs. 3, 5). The LXX reads "prince," in harmony with the singular "thy" (v. 2).

2. Thy mother. Mother stands for Jerusalem (see Gal. 4:26), or perhaps here for the whole national community. On the figure of the lion see Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; 24:9. Israel, personified as a lioness, lay down among the lions, that is, the other kingdoms of the world, the Gentile nations. She took her place in the family of nations.

3. One of her whelps. Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, also known as Shallum (1 Chron. 3:15; Jer. 22:11; see on 2 Kings 23:30, 32), who was taken captive to Egypt (see v. 4).

It devoured men. Jehoahaz turned his back on the reforms of his father, Josiah (2 Kings 23:1–25), and did evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 23:32). On the figure of devouring men see (Eze. 22:25, 27).

4. Heard. A change of the Hebrew verb form permits the translation “sounded an alarm” (RSV).

Chains. Heb. *chachim*, “thorns,” or “hooks,” such as were placed in the nostrils of captives or animals. To these, ropes were attached for the purpose of leading the victims (see 2 Kings 19:28; Isa. 37:29; Eze. 38:4).

Of Egypt. See 2 Kings 23:33, 34; 2 Chron. 36:4.

5. Another of her whelps. Identified by the details of v. 9 as Jehoiachin. The intervening reign of Jehoiakim 2 Kings 23:34 to 24:6) is passed by without notice.

6. Devoured men. See on v. 3.

7. Desolate palaces. Heb. *’almenoth*, literally, “widows.” If the literal meaning is here intended, it would refer to the injury of widows, whom the king should have protected. The Targums and Theodotion’s Greek version render the word as from *’armenoth*, “fortresses.”

9. To the king of Babylon. Jehoiachin had reigned about three months when Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and the king carried as a captive to Babylon and put in prison (2 Kings 24:8–17). He was there at the time of this prophecy. Some years later he was released (2 Kings 25:27–30).

10. A vine. A new allegory is introduced, in which Israel is compared to a thriving vine.

In thy blood. Heb. *bedamka*, an obscure phrase for which no satisfactory meaning can be obtained. Some have suggested the interpretation “in thy life,” “in thy freshness,” the sap of the vine being considered as blood. Others suggest that the Hebrew should read *tidmeh*, from the root *damah*, “to be like.” The sentence would then read, “Thy mother was like a vine” (see RSV). This is also the reading of the Targums. The LXX, evidently following a different text, reads, “like a blossom in a pomegranate tree.” Two Hebrew manuscripts read, “thy vineyard.”

11. Rods. Heb. *maṭṭoh*, a plural form, but the singular form *maṭṭeh* occurs in vs. 12, 14. The LXX has the singular in v. 11 also. If the plural is intended here, the reference is to the princes of the royal house; if the singular, Jehoiachin.

12. Plucked up. This refers to the captivity and deportation of Jehoiachin and a part of the people (2 Kings 24:10–16).

13. Dry and thirsty ground. This represents Babylon. The figure is that of a vine being removed from a rich soil and transplanted into dry and barren ground.

14. Fire is gone out of a rod. Zedekiah’s revolt from Nebuchadnezzar caused that monarch to march his army into Judea, take Jerusalem, and carry the Jews captive to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1–17; see on Eze. 17:11–21). Thus an end was put to the vine and its branches.

This is a lamentation. The desolation was only partially accomplished now. Complete destruction would be cause for further lamentation.

CHAPTER 20

1 *God refuseth to be consulted by the elders of Israel. 5 He sheweth the story of their rebellions in Egypt, 10 in the wilderness, 27 and in the land. 33 He promiseth to gather them by the gospel. 45 Under the name of a forest he sheweth the destruction of Jerusalem.*

1. The seventh year. Of Jehoiachin's captivity (see on ch. 1:2), that is, 591/590 B.C. (see p. 568). This new date applies to chs. 20:1 to 23:49 (see ch. 24:1). The unity of the new series of messages is shown by the threefold repetition of the expression "wilt thou judge" (chs. 20:4; 22:2; 23:36).

Came to enquire. The nature of their inquiry is not disclosed. No doubt they wished to know what message the Lord had to give them in this present crisis.

3. I will not be enquired of. God never withholds light from the honest seeker. But if the inquirer refuses to walk in the light already revealed, it is presumptuous to ask for more. Men frequently seek for more light in the hope of avoiding some unpleasant duty that God is asking them to perform (see 2 Thess. 2:10, 11).

4. Cause them to know. The prophet is directed to recount Israel's past history. With this chapter may be compared Neh. 1, Ps. 78, and the speech of Stephen recorded in Acts 7.

5. Thus saith the Lord. Verses 5–9 are a discussion of the Egyptian period of Israel's history.

When I chose. See Deut. 4:37; 7:7.

Lifted up mine hand. The sign of an oath (see Gen. 14:22; Deut. 32:40; Rev. 10:5, 6). The same expression occurs in Eze. 20:6, 15, 23, 42.

Made myself known. See Ex. 4:29–31.

6. Milk and honey. See on Ex. 3:8.

Glory of all lands. A descriptive phrase used only by Ezekiel. Isaiah calls Babylon "the glory of kingdoms" (Isa. 13:19).

8. Rebelled against me. History does not directly mention such a revolt in Egypt. However, the propensity of the people toward the idolatrous customs of Egypt is alluded to in Joshua 24:14; cf. PP 259. When the opportunity came to leave Egypt, many were reluctant to go (PP 260).

9. For my name's sake. Here is given the ground of God's gracious dealings. The people were not to flatter themselves that any goodness of their own had merited these favors (see Num. 14:11–20; Deut. 9:28; Jer. 14:7, 21).

10. Into the wilderness. Verses 10–22 review the second period of Israel's history, namely, the life in the wilderness.

11. Live in them. Compare Gal. 3:12. From Eze. 20:11 we must not conclude that all that was required was an outward, technical, and perfunctory keeping of certain definite precepts. God wished that man's obedience should be prompted by love and by an intelligent appreciation of God's character. However, through lack of spiritual training Israel was not at first able to enter into this higher relationship. Nevertheless God planned to lead the people into such an experience as rapidly as possible. It was never His purpose that throughout the OT period men should have such a limited grasp of the plan of salvation (see on ch. 16:60).

12. I gave them my sabbaths. Not that the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai, for it had existed since creation (Gen. 2:1–3); but it was there commanded anew. The word "remember" in the fourth commandment implies its earlier existence (see Ex. 16:22–28;

PP 258). The Decalogue (Ex. 20:8–11) presents the great facts of the creation history as the basis for the Sabbath. God created “heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” in six literal days (see on Gen. 1:5). On the seventh day He rested, and set the day apart as the day of rest for all mankind (Mark 2:27). The observance of the Sabbath is then a mark, or sign, that he who honors the day acknowledges Jehovah as his God, for only to Him do these facts of creation apply. The observance of the day does not rest upon any natural division of time into weekly cycles, but upon an express command of God, and belief in His revelation. Men may reason that the salutary purposes of the Sabbath could be as readily realized upon another day. However, God has specified a particular day. He has bidden us to keep it holy, free from worldly pursuits and personal pleasures (Isa. 58:13). This obligation men cannot with impunity escape.

The prophecies of Rev. 12–14 make it clear that the Sabbath will be the point especially controverted in the days preceding the coming of the Son of man (see GC 605). God’s remnant will be distinguished by their observance of the commandments of God (Rev. 12:17; 14:12), including the Sabbath command. At the same time apostate religious powers will exalt a false sabbath and demand allegiance to it. Men will be called upon to decide between the Sabbath of the Lord and the substitute sabbath, or first day of the week. The keeping of the Sabbath will thus again become a distinctive test and constitute a sign (called a seal, Rev. 7) of true worshipers (see GC 640).

13. *Rebelled against me.* For a historical example of Israel’s rebellion against God’s commandments in the wilderness see Ex. 32:1–6. Of the violation of the Sabbath there are two recorded instances (Ex. 16:27; Num. 15:32).

14. *For my name’s sake.* For His name’s sake God did not completely destroy the people, but merely excluded that generation from the possession of Canaan (Num. 14:29–33). For references to idolatries in their desert wanderings see Amos 5:25, 26; Acts 7:42, 43.

18. *Unto their children.* Verses 18–26 review the third part of Israel’s history—the generation that grew up in the wilderness under the influence of the legislation and institutions given at Sinai. The people were earnestly warned to avoid the sins of their fathers. The orations of Deuteronomy were addressed to that generation.

20. *Hallow my sabbaths.* See on v. 12. The Sabbath was there declared to be a sign that “I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Here it is a sign “that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” The Sabbath, coming with regularity every seventh day, was designed to keep God ever in remembrance (see PK 182). Had the Sabbath always been kept as God intended, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater or an atheist (see PP 336). For other instances of the plural form, “sabbaths,” see Ex. 31:13; Lev. 23:38.

21. *The children rebelled.* The sons followed the example of their fathers. Historical evidences are found in Num. 15–17. God threatened that He would destroy the whole congregation (Num. 16:21–45), but desisted for His name’s sake.

23. *Scatter them.* This threat should be understood in the light of the warnings of Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; 28:64. The predicted exile did not come upon that immediate generation. Many centuries elapsed before the penalty was actually inflicted in its fullness. At the time of Ezekiel’s prophecy it had been fulfilled in part and was about to be completely accomplished.

25. Statutes that were not good. These are not the “statutes, ... which if a man do, he shall even live in them” (v. 11). They are not any part of the Mosaic law. This is evident from the reference to the consecration of children to Molech in v. 26. The statutes the people had adopted, which were not good, came from the heathen round about them. But how can it be said that God gave these to them? In Bible figure, many acts are attributed to God, not with the idea that He actually performs them, but from the point of view that in His omnipotence and omniscience He does not prevent them. An understanding of this principle helps to explain many apparently contradictory statements, which, like the one here under consideration, seem to contradict flatly the Bible teaching that God’s character is pure and holy (see Isa. 63:17; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

Attempts have been made to apply this text to the multitude of ceremonies and ordinances of the Mosaic law, which, if Israel had been obedient and had loved to keep God’s commandments, would not have been required (see 5T 666, 667). But the provisions of the Mosaic code can hardly be designated “statutes that were not good,” for the former were already in existence when Ezekiel made this pronouncement. Furthermore, the ceremonial law was given by Christ Himself, and was worthy of its divine author. Paul himself declares this law glorious. The clearer light that we now possess should not lead us to despise that which was earlier given in types and symbols (see PP 367, 368).

It has also been suggested that the “statutes” described as “not good” refer to the permissive decrees of Heaven by which various heathen nations successively oppressed God’s people (see on Dan. 4:17). Such had been the case in the repeated Assyrian invasions of Judah (Isa. 8:7; 10:5, 6; cf. Isa. 5:25, 26; 9:11, 12; Amos 6:14), and was now being repeated under Nebuchadnezzar (Isa. 47:5, 6; cf. Isa. 42:24, 25; 60:10, 15; Jer. 1:11–16; 4:18; 5:15–19).

26. I polluted them. This clause should be understood in harmony with the statement in v. 25. God did not actually pollute the people; He only permitted them to suffer the consequences of their own course. In Bible figure God is frequently said to do that which He permits to be done or does not prevent. Some of the versions such as Luther’s and Van Ess’s introduce the permissive idea directly into their translation: “I permitted them to be polluted,” etc.

To pass through the fire. See on ch. 16:20.

27. Blasphemed me. Verses 27–29 review the fourth period of Israel’s history—the longest of all periods, beginning with the entry into Canaan and reaching to the prophet’s day.

29. Bamah. The transliteration of the Heb. *bamah*, a word signifying “high place,” and so translated earlier in this verse. Some suggest a word play in the Hebrew, the word translated “go” *ba’im*, having a sound similar to *bamah*. On “high places” see on ch. 6:3.

30. Are ye polluted? The prophet now addresses his contemporaries and accuses them of the same sins that characterized their forefathers.

31. I will not be enquired of. Compare v. 3.

32. As the heathen. On the desire to be “like all the nations” that are round about see 1 Sam. 8:5, 20. The prophet here reads the secret aspirations of his inquirers and flatly contradicts their sordid ambitions. Possibly they flattered themselves that if they could be released from their spiritual responsibility as Jehovah’s chosen people they would escape the severe punishments that the prophets had threatened. They may have believed that if

they simply accepted the state of the heathen, together with correspondingly smaller responsibilities, Jehovah would leave them alone. But as it was, they felt that they were being continually disturbed with judgments on account of their unwillingness to accomplish their divine mission. The answer comes that this will not be at all, for Israel stands in a very different relationship to God from that of the heathen. Men are dealt with according to the light and privileges they have had. God does not easily withdraw these privileges nor lightly abandon those for whom He has planned a high destiny. What He purposes and executes is for the good of those concerned, as they themselves will ultimately be led to admit. God continues to work with any who submit, and accomplishes His designs, though it be but with a remnant. This is the theme of the prophecy that follows.

33. *A mighty hand.* A common expression in the Pentateuch for the mighty acts by which Jehovah liberated His people from the power of the Egyptians and led them out of Egypt (Deut. 4:34; 5:15; Deut. 7:19; etc.; cf. Ex. 6:1, 6). God is going to accomplish a new exodus.

34. *Bring you out.* Verses 34, 35 refer to God's new plan. The bringing out does not immediately bring the people into their own land. They are first to be separated from the people among whom they dwell. They will not be permitted to "be as the heathen" (v. 32).

35. *Wilderness of the people.* It is doubtful that any material wilderness is referred to, such as the Arabian or Syrian desert. The term "wilderness of the people" is vague. By contrast the former wilderness is described as a "waste howling wilderness" (Deut. 32:10), a dwelling place of fiery serpents and scorpions (Deut. 8:15). Historically, the plan Ezekiel here mentions was never fulfilled, at least not to any significant degree. The spiritual regeneration that God was seeking to bring about among the captives did not materialize. Had these purposes been realized, and had the returning exiles under Zerubbabel been spiritually revived persons, how different the subsequent history of Israel would have been!

37. *To pass under the rod.* A figure of the shepherd counting and sorting his flock (Lev. 27:32; Jer. 33:13). As in Matt. 25:33, the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The land of the restored Israel is to be a land of righteousness, and the rebels are not to enter into it.

39. *Serve ye every one.* Compare Joshua 24:15. If, after warning, men still refuse obedience, there is nothing more that God can do. Coercion is contrary to His character. Hence He does not prevent them from serving their idols. The language is similar to Rev. 22:11, which reads literally, "Let the unrighteous one do unrighteousness still, and the filthy person continue to be defiled." Again, in Hosea 4:17 the prophet declares, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Yet such decrees are not without emotions of sorrow. Adds the prophet, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? ... mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hosea 11:8).

40. *In mine holy mountain.* That is, Mt. Zion, also called the "mountain of the height of Israel" here and in ch. 17:23 (see Ps. 2:6; Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3). According to v. 39 of this chapter those who preferred their idols would be abandoned to follow their evil ways. Here those who are left are shown restored to their own country truly serving their God.

All the house of Israel. The glorious promises were to all, regardless of tribal affiliation. Yet the call was individualized and applied only to those who were willing to accept the new-covenant relationship.

Require your offerings. The ritual law would still be in force after the restoration, and hence the Christian Era is not primarily referred to. Nor did the restoration under Zerubbabel accomplish this prophecy. It is one of the conditional promises of future glory that were never realized because Israel never abandoned her sins. If the conditions had been met, the whole world might have been prepared for the coming of the Messiah, and how different the outcome of history would have been (see pp. 28–30)!

43. Ye shall loathe yourselves. This is the mark of the truly penitent. Those who seek to excuse their sins have not taken the first step toward true repentance. Job is an example of one who for a time sought to justify his course. It was only when a revelation of the character of God was portrayed before him that the contrast between his own sinfulness and the purity of his Maker became painfully apparent. In his agony he cried out, “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Paul could never forgive himself for his course in persecuting the Christians. Years later he exclaimed, “I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:19). Self-loathing over sins is one of the most effective antidotes for a future repetition of those sins. The reason we fall so repeatedly into the same errors is that we do not mourn over our sins.

44. Not according to. Salvation is and will ever be an unmerited gift. Our wicked ways have earned for us only death. There is no amount of “works” that the sinner can accumulate that will finally constitute him worthy of heaven. On the other hand there is no sin so great that it cannot be removed by sincere repentance and reformation. When the righteous man receives his rewards, all the sins that he has committed will not even be mentioned to him (see on ch. 18:22).

45. Moreover. In the Hebrew Bible vs. 45–49 form the opening to ch. 21. The KJV here follows the LXX, the Vulgate, the Syriac, and Luther’s version in its chapter division. The words “set thy face” seem to connect this section with ch. 21. The same phrase occurs in ch. 21:2.

46. Toward the south. The word “south,” occurring three times, represents three separate Hebrew words, all, however, synonymous. The expression here designates the land of Judah, which, although nearly due west from Babylon, was approached by the Babylonians from the north (see on Jer. 1:13).

47. Every green tree. That is, persons of every class—the entire population. If the distinction is one of morality (see ch. 21:4), it should be remembered that in a national catastrophe all who comprise that nation, whether good or bad, suffer. The calamity does not necessarily represent eternal doom upon the individual. Man still has the privilege of personal salvation.

48. Not be quenched. The fire would be so fierce that no one would be able to extinguish it. Hence it would burn till it had accomplished its work of destruction. Then it would die of its own accord. This same expression, applied to the fires of hell (Mark 9:43, 45), is taken by some to mean that the fires of hell will continue throughout all eternity. Another text shows that such an interpretation is erroneous, for the fire in Jerusalem lighted by the Chaldeans was not quenched (Jer. 17:27), though it died out when the work of devastation was accomplished.

49. Doth he not speak parables? The people desire to avoid the application of the prophecy to themselves by labeling it obscure. They pretend not to understand it.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

10–209T 233

11 PP 372

12 CH 223; DA 288; ML 259; PK 182

12–20MM 123

13–24PP 410

16, 19 PK 182

20 DA 283; GC 437; PK 182; 7T 108, 121

33 FE 449

37 Ed 174; MH 404; PK 500

49 8T 68

CHAPTER 21

1 *Ezekiel prophesieth against Jerusalem with a sign of sighing.* 8 *The sharp and bright sword,* 18 *against Jerusalem,* 25 *against the kingdom,* 28 *and against the Ammonites.*

1. The word of the LORD. Verses 1–7 reproduce in plain language the enigmatical parable of ch. 20:45–59.

2. Toward Jerusalem. Instead of the threefold “south” (ch. 20:46) the expressions “Jerusalem,” “the holy places,” and “the land of Israel” now appear.

3. My sword. The “fire” of the enigmatical parable (ch. 20:47) is shown to be the sword of the invader.

4. The righteous. See on ch. 20:47. In national judgments the innocent are frequently involved in the same temporal sufferings as the guilty.

5. Not return any more. That is, until it had completed its mission. Then it must of necessity return. The expression “not return any more” must be taken in this limited sense. The same idea of restricted duration is found in ch. 20:48, where it is stated that the fires of God’s judgments shall not be quenched (see comment there). Similar expressions are at times mistakenly taken to mean that there will be no end to the punishment. In each case the length of continuance must be determined by the context (see on ch. 30:13).

6. Breaking of thy loins. Compare Nahum 2:1, 10. The prophet is bidden to make vivid to his listeners how deeply all would be moved by the news of Jerusalem’s fall.

7. Every heart shall melt. Compare Luke 21:26.

8. The word of the Lord. Verses 8–17 may be entitled “The Song of the Sharpened and Furbished Sword.” In general these verses are an expansion of the message of vs. 1–6.

10. Contemneth the rod of my son. The Hebrew of this sentence is obscure. It reads literally, “Or we will rejoice, the rod of my son, despising every tree.” The LXX reads, “Slay, set at nought, despise every tree” (the reference may be to the green and dry trees of ch. 20:47). The Hebrew may be understood as follows: “Or shall we rejoice, the rod [that is, of chastisement (see Prov. 10:13)], my son, despising every tree” (see on Eze. 20:47).

11. The slayer. That is, the king of Babylon (see v. 19).

12. Upon thy thigh. A mark of extreme shame or grief (see Jer. 31:19). The object of the gestures was to attract attention and to raise inquiry (see on Eze. 4:1).

13. *Because it is a trial.* The Hebrew of this passage is obscure. The translation of the RSV, “For it will not be a testing—what could it do if you despise the rod?” is an attempt to make understandable this obscure passage.

14. *Smite thine hands.* A gesture of strong emotion, here evidently of horror (see Eze. 21:17; cf. Num. 24:10).

The third time. An obscure passage possibly meaning that the stroke of the sword would come not only once or twice but three times.

Privy chambers. The last clause reads literally, “which encompasses them,” that is, preventing escape.

15. *The point.* Heb. *ibchah*, a word occurring only here. Some think *’ibchah* may be a misspelling of *ṭibcah*, a word occurring in 1 Sam. 25:11; Ps. 44:22; Jer. 12:3 with the meaning “flesh,” or “slaughter.” The sentence would then read, “I have appointed a sword for slaughter.”

16. *One way or other.* The command is given to the sword, as is clearly evident in the Hebrew.

17. *Smite mine hands together.* By a figure ascribing human acts and feelings to God, Jehovah is here declared as doing what He commanded the prophet to do (see on v. 14).

My fury to rest. See on ch. 16:42.

18. *The word of the Lord.* The third prophecy of the chapter, more specific than the former.

19. *Two ways.* The king of Babylon is pictured at the crossroads hesitating as to whether he should take first the road to Jerusalem or the one to the capital of the Ammonites (v. 20).

Choose thou a place. Literally, “cut a hand.” That is, erect a signpost. This would be placed several hundred miles west of Babylon, perhaps at Tadmor (see on 1 Kings 9:18), or perhaps as far as the valley of the Orontes.

21. *To use divination.* The heathen resorted to divination when important questions were to be decided. Three particular forms are here mentioned.

Made his arrows bright. Better, “shook his arrows together.” The Babylonian method was probably similar to that used by the Arabs later. Several headless arrows marked with appropriate messages were shaken together in a quiver or other vessel, and one drawn out; or the container was whirled, and the one that fell out first was chosen. The mark upon this arrow was supposed to indicate the will of the gods.

Images. Heb. *teraphim*, small human figurines (see on Gen. 31:19). How they were used for divination is not known.

Looked in the liver. This mode of divining, called hepatoscopy (see on Dan. 1:20), was common among the Babylonians. Clay models of sheep’s livers, marked with lines and inscriptions, and evidently used for instructional purposes, have been discovered.

Although no form of divination is countenanced by the Christian church, many Christians attempt to obtain divine guidance by methods not approved of God—methods in their essential nature similar to ancient methods of divination. Among such methods may be listed that of seeking an answer from God by tossing up a coin; or that of asking the Lord to answer Yes or No by writing the words on either side of the card, and then dropping it, accepting as an answer the way in which the card falls. Some permit the

Bible to fall open at random and accept the message of the text upon which their eyes fall. Again, others place various ideas on different cards, then shake them around and accept the answer of the one drawn. Other devices could be listed, all of which follow the same basic pattern of chance. It is not denied that the Lord at times has given guidance by some of these means, especially to the unenlightened, or possibly in emergencies, but they are haphazard methods that ought to be discarded as the soul grows in grace.

If, in every decision of life, a man received a direct answer from God by some outward sign, he would become a mere machine. He would rob himself of the basic right and freedom of man, namely, that of self-determination, a faculty given to him of God.

The casting of lots belongs in this same category and ought not to be resorted to. The following counsel has been given: "I have no faith in casting lots. . . . To cast lots for the officers of the church is not in God's order" (EGW letter 37, 1900).

22. At his right hand. That is, the lot for Jerusalem came into the king's right hand.

23. As a false divination. That is, in the sight of the people of Jerusalem.

Sworn oaths. This again may be understood to refer to the Jews, who had sworn fidelity to the Babylonians (2 Chron. 36:13; Eze. 17:18, 19). These oaths they had violated. This appears to be the simplest meaning of the text.

Call to remembrance. The subject may be the Lord, and the "iniquity" the general sinfulness of the people. Or the subject may be Nebuchadnezzar, who will call to remembrance and punish the violation of the oath (2 Chron. 36:10, 13; Jer. 52:3; Eze. 17:15–19).

24. Your sins do appear. Their sins should have been covered in the service of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Inasmuch as Israel had refused to acknowledge her guilt, it stood "discovered," and demanded punishment. Every fresh transgression called to mind the whole record of the earlier sinful course, and now the cumulative total called for speedy retribution.

25. Wicked prince. Zedekiah.

26. Diadem. Heb. *miṣnepheth*, translated "diadem" only here. Elsewhere (Ex. 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev. 8:9; 16:4) it describes the "mitre" of the high priest.

Miṣnepheth comes from the root, *ṣanaph*, "to wrap around," hence properly means a turban. Here the kingly turban, a badge of royalty, is apparently referred to.

Not be the same. There would be a complete change in the existing state of things.

27. I will overturn. The passage reads literally, "a ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will set it." The threefold repetition intensifies the idea. The edict is concerning the throne of the house of David. "Not until Christ Himself should set up His kingdom, was Judah again to be permitted to have a king" (PK 451; cf. Ed 179).

28. Concerning the Ammonites. Although the king of Babylon chose to attack Jerusalem instead of Rabbath (vs. 20–22), the Ammonites would not escape punishment (see ch. 25:1–7).

29. See. Heb. *chazah*, frequently used with reference to the utterances of the seer or prophet; here doubtless of the Ammonite soothsayers.

To bring thee. That is, the sword described in v. 28.

30. Shall I cause it to return? Literally an imperative: "Cause it to return into its sheath." The command is addressed to the Ammonites (see v. 28). Their venture would

be carried out in vain. In their own country they would receive punishment for their misdeeds.

31. Brutish. Heb. *bo'arim*, derived from *be'ir*, “beasts,” “cattle” (see Ps. 49:10; 92:6).

These brutish men are pointed out in Eze. 25:4, 10.

32. No more remembered. In contrast with the glorious promise to Israel (v. 27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3, 5, 7 PK 452

25–27 PK 451

26, 27 Ed 179

27 8T 86, 97

31 PK 452

CHAPTER 22

1 *A catalogue of sins in Jerusalem.* 13 *God will burn them as dross in his furnace.* 23 *The general corruption of prophets, priests, princes, and people.*

1. Moreover. Chapter 22 may be divided into three parts: vs. 1–16 a catalog of the sins of Jerusalem; vs. 17–22 the figure of the smelting of ore; vs. 23–31 the general corruption pervading all classes.

2. Wilt thou judge? See on ch. 20:1.

Bloody city. That is, “a city of bloodshed,” or “a city of bloodguiltiness.” Judicial murders and the offering of children in sacrifice to Molech were doubtless among the crimes that earned for Jerusalem this infamous title.

3. That her time may come. Her time of punishment. This should be considered a clause of result rather than of purpose, or, perhaps, a figure by which the consequences of an act are presented as the purpose of the act.

4. A mocking. Or, “a derision.” Compare Ps. 44:13, 14; 79:4.

5. Those that be near. The Hebrew word translated by this phrase is feminine, as is the word translated “those that be far.” It doubtless refers to the near and distant cities. The word for “city” is feminine in the Hebrew.

6. To their power. Literally, “according to his arm,” that is, according to his strength. The princes of Judah disregarded justice and ruled according to their personal pleasure.

To shed blood. Notice the threefold occurrence of this refrain (vs. 6, 9, 12). Under three heads the prophet enumerates Israel’s sins: under the first, sins of inhumanity and profanation (vs. 6–8); under the second, sins of idolatry, incest, and lewdness (vs. 9–11); under the third, avarice and covetousness (v. 12).

13. Smitten mine hand. Here a gesture of indignation (see chs. 6:11; 21:14, 17).

14. Can thine heart endure? The question implies a negative answer.

15. Consume thy filthiness. Though here not emphasized, the punishments were designedly salutary.

16. Shalt take thine inheritance. The Hebrew word translated by this phrase, *chalal*, means “to profane,” and is thus translated in ch. 7:24. The ancient versions have the verb in the first person, yielding the translation, “I shall be defiled through you in the sight of the heathen” (see chs. 20:9; 36:20).

17. The word of the Lord. Verses 17–22 are a parable based on the process of smelting silver ore. The furnace is Jerusalem (v. 19). The people are the ore (v. 20). They turn out to be dross (v. 18). It is doubtful whether the idea of purification is to be found in

this parable. The thought emphasized is that of divine anger blowing upon the worthless ore and melting it.

23. *The word of the Lord.* Verses 23–31 constitute the third section of the chapter (see on v. 1). They contain a further enumeration of the sins of Israel, showing that all classes had been involved.

25. *Prophets.* The LXX reads “princes.” A change of one letter in the Hebrew accounts for the difference. The false prophets had already been indicted in ch. 13. Their work proved to be a continual hindrance to the work of the true prophets. It is no wonder that the people were confused and that they found plausible excuse for not obeying the divine directions in the light of such contradictory assertions.

The same confusion exists in the religious world today. Because the Christian world is hopelessly divided and pious men may be found in the various communions, many conclude that, after all, it makes little difference what they believe.

The only sure antidote against the influence of false prophets in our day is to know by personal investigation what is truth. It is not safe to depend upon the research, the opinions, or the wisdom of any man (CW 45; 5T 686; GC 593, 594).

Because false prophets were to be particularly prevalent in the last days, Jesus repeatedly warned against their subtle devices (see Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 24). He mentions that “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). He speaks, too, of their resort to “great signs and wonders,” a device almost wholly lacking in Ezekiel’s day. As the great day of God draws near, Satan will intensify his efforts to deceive. More and more, as heavenly angels release their restraint, he will take control of the world. Under the guise of religion, and by means of miracles, he will fasten his grip on the inhabitants of this world. “All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Hence, we need a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures to distinguish between the counterfeit and the true (GC 593, 594).

26. *Have violated my law.* It was the special work of the priests to give instruction concerning the divine requirements and to observe and to teach the distinction between the holy and the unholy (Lev. 10:10), and to instruct the people in proper Sabbath observance. In all this they had been unfaithful.

Hide their eyes. This indictment has a striking parallel in our day. The prophecies of the book of Revelation (chs. 12–14) declare that God is calling for a reform in the matter of a return to the true Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day of the week. This reformation is to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ. The message has been proclaimed. The reaction has been the same as in Ezekiel’s day. Men hide their eyes from the obligation to keep the true Sabbath. They close their eyes to plain scriptural evidences and declare, “I cannot see it.”

27. *Princes.* Heb. *śarim*, members of the ruling class and leaders of important families.

28. *Untempered mortar.* Whitewash (see on ch. 13:10). There are voices in the religious world to support almost any kind of belief.

Several important rules will help men today to distinguish between that which is untempered mortar and that which is genuine. These rules should be used to test any alleged claim to scriptural support. They serve equally as a system of guidance to direct one in original Bible research, lest unwarranted conclusions be drawn.

1. The Bible should always be studied in the setting of prayer. Only the Holy Spirit can help us to see the importance of those things easy to be understood, and keep us from wresting those truths difficult of comprehension (see GC 599, 600). Furthermore, spiritual things are spiritually discerned (see 1 Cor. 2:14), so that a man without the Spirit of God cannot understand divine things. Prayer, properly exercised, will place a man in a condition to receive heavenly truth.
2. There must be willingness to follow revealed light (John 7:17). God's truths are not thrown about promiscuously for men to trample under their feet. God reserves an understanding of His messages for those who are willing to walk in the light that illuminates their minds. A stubborn refusal to walk in this light locks the door to further understanding of divine truth.
3. The Bible must be interpreted according to the analogy of the rest of Scripture. The Bible, correctly understood, does not contradict itself. If a conclusion drawn from a Scripture passage is contradicted in another portion of the Book, that conclusion must be labeled as false. Often a verse or passage, taken by itself, can be shown to have several possible interpretations. In such an event that exposition which is in complete harmony with the whole Bible must be adopted.
4. The Bible must be interpreted in the light of its context. The student ought to note carefully the setting of the passage under consideration to find out what the writer was talking about. The student must limit his application to the bounds set by the author. For example, when Paul said, "All things are lawful unto me" (1 Cor. 6:12), his words, taken by themselves, could be interpreted to mean that Paul was here declaring himself to be a libertine. But the context shows that he is speaking about the propriety of eating meats sacrificed to idols. One has no right to apply the "all things" to anything further than that which was in the mind of Paul when he made this statement.
5. The Bible must be permitted to be its own interpreter. Often the Holy Spirit does not immediately interpret the symbol it employs, but the same Spirit would be expected elsewhere to explain the shadowy language, if men are to grasp its meaning. This is found to be the case. One might add that when such further elucidation is absent, any attempt by men to interpret these symbols can at best be only conjecture.

In summary, the proper procedure to discover what the Bible teaches on any topic is to take all that the Bible says on that particular subject before drawing any conclusions. Seeing the picture in its entirety prevents one from going off on some unscriptural tangent of interpretation.

29. *The people of the land.* The common people are now indicted.

30. *Sought for a man.* Compare Jer. 5:1.

Stand in the gap. God is calling upon men today to repair the breach in the law of God. Many have responded, but others still reason from the worldling's standpoint, and see no need of reform. Of those who take hold of the work it is declared, "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isa. 58:12).

31. *The fire of my wrath.* This is obviously figurative language, in which the various judgments of God are referred to as fire. Fire consumes, and the effect of these judgments was to consume those upon whom they were poured out. At the end of time those who have rejected divine mercy will experience literal fire (Rev. 20:9).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

8 PK 182
28 TM 43; 1T 247
31 PK 182

CHAPTER 23

1 *The whoredoms of Aholah and Aholibah. 22 Aholibah is to be plagued by her lovers. 36 The prophet reproveth the adulteries of them both, 45 and sheweth their judgments.*

1. The word of the Lord. Chapter 23 presents an extended allegory whose primary purpose is to set forth the sinfulness of Judah. The allegory is similar to that of ch. 16, though with some difference. Political alliances with foreign nations are the chief point of illustration here.

2. One mother. The two cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, had one common mother, the Hebrew people. They had a common ancestry.

3. In their youth. For the purpose of the parable they are represented as having had a separate existence even during the period of the sojourn in Egypt. It was in their “youth” that they had become alienated from God. At this time Israel was still considered unmarried. The marriage with Jehovah took place when the covenant was made at Sinai (Ex. 19).

4. Aholah. Heb. *’Oholah*, meaning “tent.” A slight alteration of the Hebrew gives the meaning “her tent,” which, if correct, would call attention to the fact that Samaria set up her own worship instead of permitting the people to resort to the Temple (1 Kings 12:26–33). If *’Oholah* means simply “tent” there may be an allusion to tents of prostitution such as probably adorned high places.

Aholibah. Heb. *’Oholibah*, being either an emphatic form of the noun meaning, as does *’Oholah*, “tent,” or, with a slight change in the Hebrew, “my tent [is] in her.” The latter meaning would call attention to the fact that the sanctuary of the Lord was in Judah. On the significance of the meaning of “tent” see foregoing comments under “Aholah.”

They were mine. Both professed allegiance to the true God.

5. The Assyrians. On Samaria seeking foreign alliances see Hosea 7:11, 12.

6. Horsemen. The Assyrians were famous for their cavalry.

8. Whoredoms brought from Egypt. Probably a reference to an event that precipitated the fall of Samaria (see 2 Kings 17:4; cf. Hosea 7:11).

9. Delivered her. See 2 Kings 17:5, 6. The history of Samaria is briefly passed over, because that nation is no longer existent, and is used as a basis of comparison for a more detailed portrayal of Judah’s folly.

11. She was more corrupt. In addition to her alliance with Assyria and Egypt, Judah sought the aid of the Babylonians (v. 16).

12. The Assyrians. Examples that may be cited are the overtures of Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser for his assistance against the Syrians and Israelites (2 Kings 16:7–9), and Hezekiah’s attempt to buy off Sennacherib while at the same time trusting in Egypt (2 Kings 18:14, 21).

13. Both one way. Both sisters followed the same course.

14. Men portrayed upon the wall. Such portraiture in beautiful colors were characteristic of the Assyrians, and the Babylonians also decorated walls with figures in color.

16. Sent messengers. Perhaps Manasseh, while a captive in Babylon (2 Chron. 33:11), had seen in that city a possible rival to Assyria. The embassy of Merodach-baladan to Hezekiah (Isa. 39) suggests that Babylon was looking to Judah for support against Assyria (see on 2 Kings 20:12). The precise occasion when Judah sent the messengers here referred to is not known.

17. Her mind was alienated. Judah became satiated with her Babylonian alliance and sought the aid of Egypt. Verses 17–19 describe this vacillating policy (see 2 Kings 24; 25).

18. My mind was alienated. The Lord became weary of Judah and turned from her with revulsion.

20. Paramours. Heb. *pilagshim*, the word commonly used of concubines (Gen. 22:24; 2 Sam. 3:7). Here it refers to the Egyptian princes whose favor Judah sought.

Asses. These animals are here introduced to show the intensity of lust (see Jer. 2:24; 5:8; Hosea 8:9).

23. Pekod. The name of an Aramaean tribe living east of the Tigris near the mouth of the river (see Jer. 50:21).

Shoa, and Koa. Believed to be the *Sutû* and *Qutû*, tribes living east of the Tigris.

24. Chariots. Heb. *hošen*, the meaning of which is unknown. The LXX reads “from the north,” which makes good sense.

Wheels. Compare ch. 26:10.

25. Take away thy nose. Mutilation of prisoners was practiced by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians. According to Diodorus Siculus (i. 78), the Egyptians punished an adulterous woman by cutting off her nose.

28. Whom thou hatest. See v. 17. Verses 28–31 describe the punishment of Jerusalem under the figure of the punishment of a harlot.

32. Thou shalt drink. That is, of the cup of wrath (see Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15).

34. Break the sherds. A forceful figure expressing graphically the desperation to which the Jews would be reduced in their day of suffering.

36. Wilt thou judge? Compare chs. 20:4; 22:2. A new section begins here. The prophet summarizes the sins of Aholah and Aholibah, but from a different viewpoint from that in vs. 1–22. He names three conspicuous elements: (1) Molech worship (v. 37), (2) profanation of the Temple (v. 38), and (3) Sabbathbreaking (v. 38).

39. The same day. So audacious were the Jews in their idolatry that on the day on which they had burned their children to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, they hypocritically presented themselves as worshipers in the Temple of Jehovah (see Jer. 7:9, 10).

40. Sent for men. The tense of the Hebrew verb suggests that the action was habitual. They used to send, again and again.

Paintedst thy eyes. The ancients used powdered antimony, black in color, to produce a margin around the eyes so as to make the white of the eyes look more beautiful and seducing (see on 2 Kings 9:30).

41. A stately bed. Rather, “a stately couch,” here used for reclining at a feast (see on S. of Sol. 3:7; Mark 2:15).

42. Sabeans. Heb. *sawba'im*, the meaning of which is uncertain. A slight change yields the reading “drunkards.” The prophet seems to be emphasizing the progressive degradation of the harlot city. The LXX omits this word. Men of the common sort, drunkards from the wilderness, are admitted to her embraces.

43. Will they now commit? The Hebrew of this verse is obscure and thus untranslatable. The LXX renders the verse, “Therefore I said, Do they not commit adultery with these? and has she gone awhoring [after] the manner of a harlot?”

45. Righteous men. The Babylonians may possibly be thus designated by way of contrast, and thus as a stinging rebuke to the unrighteous sisters. On the other hand the expression may be general, signifying men to whom righteous judgment has been committed.

47. With stones. There is a mixture here of the figure and the reality. Stoning was the legal punishment for adultery (Lev. 20:2, 10; Deut. 22:22, 24), but the actual overthrow of Jerusalem would be by the sword.

48. All women. That is, all nations, to whom Israel would serve as a warning and deterring example.

CHAPTER 24

¹ *Under the parable of a boiling pot, 6 is shewed the irrevocable destruction of Jerusalem. 15 By the sign of Ezekiel not mourning for the death of his wife, 19 is shewed the calamity of the Jews to be beyond all sorrow.*

1. Ninth year. Of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2), that is, 589/588 B.C. This date is the same as that given in 2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 39:1, 2; 52:4, 5. The day was evidently afterward observed by the Jews as a fast (Zech. 8:19).

Tenth month. January, 588 B.C., by either spring or fall reckoning of the year (see p. 572).

2. Write thee the name. The prophet is bidden to write down the particular day on which he delivered his message, and to announce it as that on which Nebuchadnezzar began his attack on Jerusalem. Inasmuch as Babylon was some 500 mi. (800 km.) from Jerusalem, and more than half again as far by road, the news could not have reached him by any human means. When, therefore, the captives afterward received the information, they had, on comparing the dates, convincing proof of the divine source of Ezekiel’s messages.

3. Parable. Heb. *mashal* (see Vol. III, p. 945). We are not told whether Ezekiel merely spoke the parable or actually performed the symbolical act.

Set on a pot. There seems to be an obvious reference to the imagery of ch. 11:3–7, though with different application.

4. The pieces thereof. The Jews themselves. The choice pieces probably designate the upper classes, or the mention of the various pieces may not be for the purpose of designating any particular classes, but only to emphasize that all, even the best, would be involved in the ruin.

Burn. Heb. *dur*, “to stack in circles.”

Bones. A slight change yields the reading “logs” (cf. v. 10), although bones before the fat is extracted may be used for fuel.

6. Scum. Better, “rust,” as the LXX renders the word. The city itself, represented by the pot, is, as it were, corroded with rust.

Piece by piece. Signifying that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be carried off by death or captivity.

7. Upon the top of a rock. Indicating that Jerusalem’s crimes of violence (see chs. 22:12, 13; 23:37; etc.) had been open and unabashed (see Gen. 4:10; Job 16:18; Isa. 26:21).

8. Her blood. That is, the blood that would be shed in Jerusalem’s destruction. Her punishment was to be as notorious in the sight of the world as her sin was.

10. Consume. Heb. *tamam*, literally, “to complete,” “to bring to an end.” The RSV translation “boil well” is interpretative, but probably conveys the intended idea.

Spice. Heb. *raqach*, a verb form of which is used to designate the mixing of the ingredients of the anointing oil (Ex. 30:33, 35). Its meaning here is uncertain. The LXX renders the clause, “that the broth may be diminished.”

11. Empty. The city without its inhabitants. The fire must go on till the rust is consumed. The city itself would be destroyed.

Verses 11–14 point to the ineffectiveness of former endeavors to bring about a reformation and set forth the certainty and completeness of the impending judgments.

15. Also the word. A new section begins, which is not directly connected with the parable of vs. 1–14.

16. I take away. Ezekiel is informed that his wife, whom he deeply loves, is about to die. We need not infer from the language used here that her death was the result of a direct stroke by God. His wife may have been ill for some time, and God may have warned him of her approaching death. By figure God is frequently said to do that which He permits or does not prevent (see on 2 Chron. 18:18). It is Satan who is the author of sin, suffering, and death (see DA 24, 470, 471). However, God delights to take that which the enemy brings upon us to annoy, and make it serve some good end (see Rom. 8:28; DA 471). Here the loss of the desire of Ezekiel’s eyes was used to impress vividly upon the minds of the people the divine message.

Ezekiel’s experience forcibly impresses the lesson that to engage in the service of God does not mean immunity from suffering and calamity. At times it seems that God’s messengers are more fiercely assailed than others not actively engaged in Christian labor. Many a disaster has struck those who have dedicated their lives to service in some far-flung mission field. Sudden death or sore disease has sometimes fallen upon such dedicated ones. These calamities ought not to be considered as strokes of divine judgment. They are the result of Satan’s work. The enemy must be allowed a degree of access to souls so that in the end he will not be able to declare that he was not given a fair opportunity. This principle is demonstrated in the history of Job. However, when the enemy afflicts, God delights to make the heavy sorrow work for good, to the purifying of those that remain (see DA 471).

17. Make no mourning. The customary signs of mourning were to be avoided (see Joshua 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 15:30, 32; Isa 20:2; Micah 3:7).

Bread of men. Probably a reference to the funeral meal (see Deut. 26:14; Jer. 16:7; Hosea 9:4).

18. So I spake. What the prophet spoke we are not told. He may have shared with his countrymen the tragic news concerning the death of his wife.

19. What these things are. Ezekiel's strange actions awakened the hoped-for spirit of inquiry.

21. Profane my sanctuary. The sanctuary, the desire of the eyes to the people, was to be defiled and destroyed. The unholy feet of the Gentiles would enter its most sacred precincts, where even the priests might not go.

That which your soul pitieth. Several Hebrew manuscripts read "the desire of your soul."

23. Pine away. Heb. *maqaq*, literally, "to decay," "to rot away."

24. Ezekiel. This is the only instance, aside from ch. 1:3, where Ezekiel speaks of himself by name. Parallel examples of sacred writers introducing their own names are Isa. 20:3 and Dan. 8:27.

27. In that day. Ezekiel is informed that when he hears of the fall of the city (see on ch. 33:21, 22) his tongue is to be loosed (see ch. 3:26, 27).

CHAPTER 25

¹ *God's vengeance, for their insolency against the Jews, upon the Ammonites; 8 upon Moab and Seir; 12 upon Edom, 15 and upon the Philistines.*

1. Came again. Thus begins a new series of prophecies having to do with various neighboring nations. Ezekiel had finished his testimony relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and the remnants of the Israelite state. He was to say no more about it, but was to await the fulfillment of the foretold doom. In the interval God bade him to direct his attention to the nations surrounding Israel, and to forecast their inevitable fate. Judgment had begun with the house of God (see Eze. 9:6; cf. 1 Peter 4:17), but now it was to extend to the outside world.

God is not a God of one nation only; He is a God of all the world. He is no respecter of persons. All souls are His regardless of national affiliations. He is as anxious to save the inhabitants of one nation as those of another. By revealing Himself as the supreme disposer of events and the arbiter of nations, He aimed to attract men to Himself and to solicit their worship. He planned that a display of His omniscience, in forecasting so accurately their future history, should provide the necessary basis for faith. True, the threatenings called down upon these peoples appear severe and unrelenting, unmixed with mercy. However, it must be remembered that these were national judgments in which the personal salvation of the individual citizens was not necessarily involved. It is often the case that national calamity drives men to seek God, so that what appears to be for their disadvantage really works for their good.

God keeps an accurate account with nations. They are all tested as to whether or not they will fulfill the high destiny assigned them. When their account is full, they suffer their penalty, as a nation. The same was true with Israel. It suffered the most tragic overthrow, but through it all God planned to work out the salvation of a small remnant. See on Dan. 4:17.

Furthermore, at a time when Israel was looking to some of these nations for military support, she needed to be shown the utter futility of her aspirations, for all these nations themselves would suffer defeat.

This new section contains messages to seven nations most closely connected with the fortunes of Israel and Judah: (1) Ammon (ch. 25:1–7), (2) Moab (ch. 25:8–11), (3) Edom (ch. 25:12–14), (4) Philistia (ch. 25:15–17), (5) Tyre (chs. 26:1 to 28:19), (6) Sidon (ch. 28:20–23), and (7) Egypt (chs. 29:1–32:32 to 32:32).

Some are puzzled that Ezekiel includes no prophecy against Babylon. Isaiah (Isa. 13), Jeremiah (Jer. 51:52, 53), and Daniel (Dan. 2; Dan. 7) all predict her downfall. Ezekiel's work was to point out how God would use Babylon as the executor of His will in judgments upon His people, and the effect of this might have been destroyed had he dwelt upon Babylon's own final overthrow. It was more appropriate that the exiles for whom he wrote should "seek the peace" of the people among whom they dwelt (see Jer. 29:7) than that they should exult in her eventual downfall. To speak openly against the country of his captors probably would have cost Ezekiel his life.

2. The Ammonites. Descendants of Lot by his younger daughter, and thus blood relatives of Israel (Gen. 19:38). For centuries they had shown hostility (Judges 3:13; 11:12–15, 32, 33; 1 Sam. 11:1–11; 2 Sam. 10:6–14; Amos 1:13–15). Their religion was a degrading and cruel superstition, demanding human sacrifices. Their worship of Molech was a continual source of temptation to Israel (see 1 Kings 11:7).

3. Aha. Heb. *he'ach*, an interjection, here of malicious joy at Jerusalem's downfall.

4. Men of the east. Heb. *bene-qedem*, literally, "sons of the east." The name is applied to various tribes that roamed to and from the wilderness east of Ammon and Moab (see Gen. 29:1; Judges 6:3, 33; 7:12; 8:10; 1 Kings 4:30; Job 1:3).

Palaces. Heb. *tiroth* enclosures protected by stone walls used for encampments (see Gen. 25:16; Num. 31:10; Ps. 69:25). The LXX renders the passage, "They shall lodge in thee with their stuff, and they shall pitch their tents in thee."

5. Rabbah. Rabbath-ammon, the capital city of the Ammonites (2 Sam. 12:26; Eze. 21:20), 23 mi. (36.8 km.) east of the Jordan near the source of the Jabbok. Ptolemy Philadelphus later founded the city of Philadelphia on the site of Rabbah. This Philadelphia must not be confused with a city of the same name in Asia Minor (Rev. 1:11). The modern name of Rabbah is *'Ammân*.

6. Clapped thine hands. To clap the hands and to stamp the feet are gestures of strong emotion (Num. 24:10; Eze. 21:14, 17; Eze. 22:13); here these actions are manifestations of malicious joy. The cause of the rejoicing was apparently not the prospect of material advantage, but malice and "despite against the land of Israel." They should have trembled at the realization of how Rabbah might have been selected instead of Jerusalem for the initial campaign (Eze. 21:19–22).

7. Know that I am the Lord. A fact that they had been unwilling to recognize before. God designed that a knowledge of His power would lead men to seek His salvation.

8. Moab and Seir. Other prophecies against Moab are found in Isa. 15; Isa. 16; Jer. 48; Zeph. 2:8, 9. The two nations are possibly mentioned together here because of the similarity of their sins. They are later treated separately, Moab (Eze. 25:8–11) and Seir, or Edom (ch. 25:12–14). Seir is another name for Edom. The LXX mentions only Moab here.

The Moabites were descendants of Lot by his elder daughter, and so were blood relatives of Israel, as were also the Ammonites (see on v. 2). These two countries, closely associated in their history and fortunes, are threatened with similar doom.

Moab is repeatedly mentioned in sacred history (see Num. 22; 24; 25; Judges 3:12–31; 1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:2; 2 Kings 3:5; 24:2; 2 Chron. 20). Sometimes Israel was in subjection to Moab, as under Eglon (Judges 3:12–31) and sometimes Moab was in subjection to Israel, as under David (2 Sam. 8:2).

The Moabite Stone, found in the ruins of Dibon in 1868, tells of the oppression of Moab by Omri, king of Israel, and of Moab's revolt under Mesha, her king. Mesha attributes his victory over Israel to his god, Chemosh (see Additional Note on 2 Kings 3).

Like unto all the heathen. The inhabitants of Judah had asserted that their God was superior to heathen gods and was able to deliver them. Now Judah's misfortune seemed to deny this claim. The Moabites exulted with malicious delight at the plight of their neighbors to the west.

9. Open the side of Moab. That is, open up Moab's flank to the enemy. Lying on a high plateau with steep approaches, Moab was not easily accessible to her enemies. But if the cities on the frontier fell, the rest of the country would soon be overrun.

Beth-jeshimoth. A city at *Sweimé (Suweima)* according to Abel, 21/2 mi. (4 km.) east of the point where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea.

Baal-meon. A town about 9 1/2 mi. (15.2 km.) east of the Dead Sea near its northern end, now called *Ma'ân*.

Kiriathaim. A town about 10 mi. (16 km.) south by west from Baal-meon, now called *el-Qereiât*.

The cities named all belonged to the region that Sihon and Og had seized from the Moabites centuries before. This territory was in turn wrested from the Amorites by the Israelites at the time of their entry, and for a long time was occupied by them. When the power of Israel waned, Moab had seized it from her. They are spoken of here, perhaps, in view of their having been a possession of Israel.

10. Men of the east. See on v. 4.

That the Ammonites. The verse division obscures the sense. The sentence should run on into v. 11: "that it may be remembered no more among the nations, and I will execute judgments upon Moab" (RSV).

12. Edom. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's elder brother. The hostility between Israel and Edom goes back to the time that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:29–34). Israel had been especially warned not to "abhor an Edomite" (Deut. 23:7). Nevertheless enmity persisted.

13. Teman. Not positively identified; formerly thought by some to be a town near Petra, a district, or a name for Edom. The people of Teman were famed for their wisdom (Jer. 49:7; Obadiah 8, 9).

Dedan. This tribe lived in the vicinity of the oasis *el-'Ola* in western Arabia.

14. By the hand of my people. This phrase suggests that the divine vengeance of Edom should be accomplished by the hand of the Israelites. Some have pointed to a fulfillment of the prediction in the Maccabean age, when John Hyrcanus conquered the Idumaeans (Josephus *Antiquities* xiii. 9. 1) and compelled them to submit to circumcision as a mark of absorption into the Jewish people. It appears more likely that this portion of the prophecy was designed to meet its fulfillment with reference to God's plans for the restored kingdom of Israel. This new state would eventually have crushed all enemies (see chs. 38; 39).

15. The Philistines. For their origin see on Gen. 10:14; 21:32; Joshua 13:2; Vol. II, pp. 27, 33, 34. For other prophecies against the Philistines see on Isa. 14:29–32; also see Jer. 47; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph. 2:4–7.

16. The Cherethims. A tribe living probably on the southern coast of the Philistines (see on 1 Sam. 30:14; cf. Zeph. 2:5).

Destroy the remnant. The Philistines have disappeared, but of Israel at least a remnant was to survive (see Isa. 1:9).

CHAPTER 26

¹ *Tyrus, for insulting against Jerusalem, is threatened. 7 The power of Nebuchadnezzar against her. 15 The mourning and astonishment of the sea at her fall.*

1. In the eleventh year. Of Jehoiachin's captivity (see on ch. 1:2; see p. 572). This is the year (587/586 B.C.) in which Jerusalem fell, if it coincides with the regnal year of Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:2–4, 8, 9). The month is not given. Some think the prophecy was given after the fall of the city (see Eze. 26:2), and it could have been if Ezekiel was using a fall-to-fall year; however, the reference to the capture of the city may have been anticipatory.

The prophecies against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines were comparatively short. That against Tyre occupies three chapters (chs. 26–28); that against Egypt, the most important foreign nation denounced by Ezekiel, four chapters.

2. Tyrus. Tyre was a powerful commercial city composed of Old Tyre, situated on the mainland, and New Tyre, built on a rocky island some 140 acres in area about a half mile from shore. New Tyre had two harbors, one on the north and one on the south. From these the Tyrians sent their fleets of ships as far into the Atlantic as West Africa and possibly Britain. Tyre founded colonies in Spain and North Africa, some of which became famous, like Carthage, Gades, and Abdera. Tyre was also famous for its craftsmen. Its manufactured products, such as works of copper, textiles (especially dyed purple), glassware, and pottery, were famous throughout the world.

The Phoenicians spoke a Semitic language. Their religion played a prominent role in their life. Their chief god was Melkarth (sometimes called Baal Melkarth), the patron god of Tyre. This was evidently the Baal worshiped in Israel under Jezebel's influence. They also worshiped Ashtoreth and other divinities with orgies of the most corrupt nature (see Vol. II, pp. 38–41).

For the history of ancient Phoenicia see on Gen. 10:6, 15, 17, 18; Vol. II, pp. 67–69.

Aha. See on ch. 25:3. Tyre's joy at Jerusalem's downfall seems to have been purely selfish. In the days of Solomon, Jerusalem had been a great inland commercial center through which flowed trade from Arabia and even from India. Jerusalem had doubtless been enriched by trade with the Phoenicians. Even in her decline, because of the importance of her situation, Jerusalem had no doubt been the center of many commercial transactions that Tyre would have been happy to monopolize.

3. Many nations. Perhaps, here, Nebuchadnezzar and "all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion," that is, his allies (see Jer. 34:1). Or the prophet may be viewing the centuries ahead. Following Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the mainland city, successive conquests further reduced the proud city. Tyre became a part of the Persian Empire, though maintaining a partly independent status. Later it was ruled by the Macedonians, then the Romans.

4. Scrape her dust. A figure of extensive destruction. Later, when Alexander besieged New Tyre, he built a causeway from the mainland to the island and used the stones and rubble from Old Tyre as material for it.

5. The spreading of nets. The site of ancient Tyre is still used by fishermen for drying their nets.

6. Daughters. Probably a poetic figure of the cities allied with Tyre who shared her fate.

7. Nebuchadrezzar. This spelling more nearly resembles the Babylonian original, *Nabû-kudurri-uşur*, than the spelling Nebuchadnezzar (see on Dan. 1:1).

King of kings. Daniel applies the same title to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:37). Persian kings adopted it (see Ezra 7:12), as can be seen from the inscriptions.

From the north. Indicating the direction of the invasion (see on Jer. 1:14).

With horses. The various divisions of the army named are all land forces. We find no record of any naval force being employed such as would have facilitated the capture of the insular city. The siege lasted 13 years. Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed the city on the mainland, but was unsuccessful in taking island Tyre. An agreement was reached by which Tyre accepted the overlordship of Babylon.

8. A fort. Verses 8–12 describe the usual methods of attack for a mainland city.

11. Garrisons. Heb. *maşseboth*, “pillars.” There may be a reference here to the two famous columns described by Herodotus (ii. 44), one of gold and one of emerald, in the temple of Melkarth, the Baal of Tyre.

12. The midst of the water. There is no record of Nebuchadnezzar’s attempting to build a mole to the island from the mainland. Such, however, was successfully undertaken by Alexander. Even then it was necessary for him to use his navy in order to bring the island city to surrender in 332 B.C. (Diodorus Siculus xvii. 40–46).

13. Thy songs. Careful readers of the book of Revelation have noted the great similarity between much of its symbolism and the language of certain passages in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. It is apparent that John, guided by Inspiration, borrowed extensively from the imagery of the prophets of old, in order to set forth the great climactic scenes of earth’s history in terms that would be familiar and meaningful to the careful reader of the OT. Thus, the desolation of literal Babylon and Tyre provided John with a pictorial description of the desolation of mystical Babylon (see also on Isa. 13; 14; 23:1; 47:1; Jer. 25:12; 50:1). The symbolism and language of the book of Revelation become more clear and meaningful when studied in the light of what the prophets of old wrote concerning events of their era (see on Deut. 18:15). Various aspects of the punishment of literal Tyre as set forth in Eze. 26 to 28 are of value in a study of the punishment of mystical Babylon, presented in Rev. 17 and 18. Note particularly the following:

Ezekiel 26 to 28

1. “I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard” (26:13).

2. “The princes of the sea” (26:16).
“Inhabited of seafaring men” (26:17).

“Thy mariners, and thy pilots” (27:27).

“All that had handle the oar, the

Revelation 17 and 18

1. “The voice of harp-ers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee” (18:22).

2. “Every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea” (18:17).
“All that had ships in the sea” (18:19).
“Thy merchants were the great men of the earth” (18:23).

mariners, and all the pilots of the sea” (27:29).

3. “They shall take up a lamentation for thee” (26:17). “Cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly” (27:30).

“They shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee” (27:31, 32).

“The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee” (27:36).

4. “How art thou destroyed” (26:17).

5. “The renowned city” (26:17).

6. “I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee” (26:19).

“Thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters” (27:34; cf. vs. 26, 27).

7. “Thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again” (26:21; cf. 27:36).

8. “A merchant of the people” (27:3).

“The merchants among the people” (27:36).

9. “Thy merchandise” (27:27).

10. “Cast up dust upon their heads . . . wallow themselves in the ashes” (27:30).

11. “What city is like Tyrus?” (27:32).

12. “Thou didst enrich the kings” (27:33).

“Kings shall be sore afraid” (27:35).

13. “Thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches” (28:5).

14. “I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations” (28:7).

15. “Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth” (28:18).

3. “The merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her” (18:11).

“The kings of the earth . . . shall bewail her, and lament for her” (18:9; cf. vs. 10, 15-19).

4. “In one hour is she made desolate” (18:19; cf. v. 10).

5. “That great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (17:18).

6. “A great millstone . . . cast . . . into the sea, . . . Thus . . . shall that great city of Babylon be thrown down” (18:21).

7. “Found no more at all” (18:21).

8. “The merchants . . . were made rich by her” (18:15). “Thy merchants were” the great men of the earth (18:23).

9. “The merchandise” (18:12).

10. “They cast dust on their heads” (18:19).

11. “What city is like unto this great city!” (18:18; cf. vs. 10, 19).

12. “The kings of the earth” (18:9). “The merchants . . . which were made rich by her” (18:15).

13. “She hath glorified herself and lived deliciously” (18:7). “So great riches” (18:17; cf. vs. 14, 15, 19).

14. “He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (16:16). “In righteousness he doth judge and make war” (19:11; cf. 17:14; 19:15, 19).

15. “Burn her with fire” (17:16). “She shall be utterly burned with fire” (18:8). “The smoke of her burning” (18:9).

14. Built no more. Some have found difficulty with this prediction in view of the fact that there is a city of some 14,000 inhabitants (1974 estimate) on the present peninsula that was formerly the island and the causeway. Some believe that the prophecy applies only to the continental city. They point to the state of desolation there—a desolation so complete that the site of the ancient city cannot even be positively identified—as evidence of the fulfillment of the prophet’s words. On the other hand it must be realized that even if a city were erected on the ancient mainland site, Ezekiel’s prophecy would not be broken. Ezekiel’s prophecy was against the Tyre of his day as it stood in its ancient glory and culture. That civilization and its accompanying city were to be destroyed. Any modern building on the site would not be a revival of the ancient culture and hence not a breaking of the prophet’s word.

Furthermore, the expression “no more” (Heb. *lo’* ... *’od*) simply means “duration,” the length of time undefined but to be derived from the context. Thus Joseph wept on the neck of his father *’od* (Gen. 46:29), there translated, “a great while.” The idea of indefinite perpetuity, though not necessarily in the word *’od*, may be inferred from further references to Tyre’s fate (see on v. 21). See also on Isa. 13:20.

15. Isles. Heb. *’ıyyim*, meaning coastlands as well as islands.

16. Princes of the sea. That is, “merchant princes,” those who had obtained wealth and power by commerce, not actual sovereigns (see Isa. 23:8). Their surprise and grief are described under the figure of Oriental mourning.

17. Inhabited of seafaring men. Literally, “inhabited from the seas.” The LXX reads simply “from the sea.”

18. Troubled. Doubtless because Tyre’s trade had contributed to their prosperity.

19. Bring up the deep. Verses 19–21 represent Tyre as descending into the pit. All who have passed from this life are represented as congregated there. Sometimes, poetically, as in Isa. 14, when a newcomer arrives, the inhabitants of the pit are represented as rousing themselves to address or to welcome him (see on Isa 14:9, 10). All of this, of course, is in figure. Ezekiel uses the same figure of Egypt (Eze. 32:18–32).

20. Set glory. The LXX seems to have preserved a better reading: “thou shalt not stand.” The Hebrew has been understood to mean that when proud Tyre, now rejoicing in the calamity of Judah, should be numbered with the dead, God would establish His people.

21. Thou shalt be no more. Literally, “nothingness of thee.”

Never be found again. Here the Heb. *’od* (see on v. 14) is connected to the word *le’olam*, meaning, literally, “for an age.” The length of *’olam* must also be determined by its context (see on Ex. 21:6). The combination of *’od* and *le’olam* seems to emphasize duration. Ezekiel’s words may thus be construed as signifying that the ancient culture and civilization of Tyre would disappear and be no more. Never would the ancient empire be revived.

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CHAPTER 27

1 *The rich supply of Tyrus.* 26 *The great and unrecoverable fall thereof.*

1. The word of the Lord. The new section carries on the prophecy against Tyre.

2. Lamentation for Tyrus. A poem in the *qinah* rhythm, the rhythm of the dirge (see Vol. III, p. 19), begins with v. 3. The lament pictures Tyre under the figure of a gallant ship, fully manned and equipped, sailing everywhere, conducting a prosperous trade, but at last brought into rough seas and shipwrecked. Occasionally the reality breaks through the figure, a characteristic of Ezekiel's style.

Perhaps the reason why so much space is given to Tyre is that her pride, her ambition, her organization, her conduct, so closely parallel that of the great rebel leader, Satan. In ch. 28:11–19, under the figure of the prince of Tyre, the prophet takes up a lamentation for Satan himself. Later, John the revelator borrows the language of Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre to utter his lament at the collapse of Satan's universal counterfeit religious organization (Rev. 18).

3. Entry. Literally, "entrances," probably here referring to Tyre's two chief harbors, the "Egyptian," on the south of the island, and the "Sidonian," on the north.

4. Thy borders. Surrounded by water, as insular Tyre was, the city suggests the figure of a ship at sea.

5. Ship boards. The planking for the sides of the ship.

Senir. The Amorite, Ugaritic, and Akkadian name for Mt. Hermon (see Deut. 3:9).

Cedars from Lebanon. Doubtless valuable because of their height, strength, durability.

6. Bashan. A fertile plateau region east of the Sea of Galilee (see on Joshua 12:4), famous for its oak forests and its cattle (see Ps. 22:12).

Company of the Ashurites. Literally, "daughter of the Ashurites," the meaning of which in the context is obscure. If the two Hebrew words that are translated by the above phrase are joined together, the reading is "in cypress," or "with cypress," or "of pines" (RSV).

Benches. Heb. *qeresh*, generally meaning "board" (Ex. 26:15; etc.), here thought possibly to refer to the prow of the vessel. The RSV translates *qeresh*, "deck."

Chittim. Specifically Cyprus, but more generally the islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean (see on Dan. 11:30).

7. Isles of Elishah. Or, "coasts of Elishah" (RSV; see on ch. 26:15). Elishah is mentioned as one of the sons of Javan (Gen. 10:4; 1 Chron. 1:7). Some have identified the isles of Elishah with Cyprus, others with Sicily and Sardinia.

That which covered. Probably the awning spread over the deck for protection from the burning sun.

8. Thy mariners. The ship's crew is now described. The two cities mentioned as the source of these mariners were tributary to Tyre. Sidon was 231/3 mi. (37.3 km.) north-northeast from Tyre on the Phoenician coast. Arvad, the Greek Aradus, was a rocky island near the coast about 100 mi. (161 km.) north of Sidon.

O Tyrus. The RSV reading "of Zemer" is based upon a slight alteration of the Hebrew text, and that upon the context and upon a comparison with Gen. 10:18. Zemer was a Phoenician city south of Arvad. Gebal is the ancient Byblos, the modern *Jebeil*, 411/2 mi. (66.4 km.) north-northeast of Sidon, situated on an eminence near the Adonis River. Its site is still rich in Phoenician ruins.

10. Of Persia. Tyre was largely dependent upon mercenaries for the rank and file of its army.

Lud. The Lydians (see on Gen. 10:13).

Phut. Believed by many Egyptologists to be the same as the Egyptian Punt, a territory in Africa bordering the Red Sea. Assyriologists, however, generally identify Phut with a division of Libya.

11. The Gammadims. This name occurs only here. The Gammadims were probably the inhabitants of *Kumidi*, a Phoenician city mentioned in the Amarna Letters. Gamad was probably a north Syrian Phoenician state.

Hanged their shields. Compare S. of Sol. 4:4.

12. Tarshish. Believed to be the Greek Tartessus, a Phoenician colony on the south coast of Spain.

Fairs. Heb. *izbonim*, “wares,” “goods,” “stores of merchandise.”

13. Javan. See on Gen. 10:2.

Tubal. The classic *Tibarenians*, the *Tabalaeans* mentioned in Assyrian cuneiform documents (see on Gen. 10:2).

Meschech. The classic Moshians (*Moschoi*), the *Mushku* of Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:2).

Togarmah. A name for the northern Armenians, a race descended from Japheth (see on Gen. 10:3), who called themselves the house of *Torgom*. They dealt in horses and asses, they inhabited the rough mountainous regions on the south side of the Caucasus.

15. Men of Dedan. An Arab tribe south of Edom (see on Gen. 10:7; Eze. 25:13).

16. Syria. A number of Hebrew manuscripts, the version of Aquila, and the Syriac read “Edom” (see on ch. 16:57). Syria is referred to later under the name of “Damascus” (ch. 27:18).

Emeralds. Heb. *nophek*, possibly the turquoise. It is difficult to identify positively many of the precious stones mentioned in the Scriptures. Through the development of chemistry, especially the branch of crystallography, it has become possible to identify some ancient precious stones by analyzing specimens found in archeological discoveries. The ancients classified a number of different stones of the same color under one name, even though of different chemical composition.

Agate. Heb. *kadkod*, possibly the ruby, or the red jasper.

17. Minnith. An Ammonite city thought to have been near Heshbon (Judges 11:33).

Pannag. A word found only here. If it is a proper name, its significance has been lost. The Targums and LXX read “ointments”; the Vulgate, “balsam.” A similar Akkadian word, *pannigu*, describes a dish of flour or pastry. By a change of the Hebrew (*paggag* instead of *pannag*) the RSV reads “early figs.”

18. Damascus. The former capital of an important Syrian kingdom.

Wine of Helbon. This wine is mentioned in Nebuchadnezzar’s inscriptions. The modern *Halbûn* is about 13 mi. (20.8 km.) north by west from Damascus. Grapes are still cultivated in the vicinity.

19. Dan. There seems to be no satisfactory explanation for the mention of this small, unimportant town. The name does not appear in the LXX and on this basis is omitted in the RSV.

Javan. Heb. *yawan*, which should probably read *yayin*, “wine” (see LXX; RSV).

Going to and fro. Heb. *me’uzzal*, which, with a change in vowel pointing, may be translated “from Uzal,” an unidentified place in Arabia (see Gen. 10:27).

Cassia, and calamus. Both of these were ingredients of the holy anointing oil for the priests (Ex. 30:23, 24).

20. Precious clothes. Believed to mean saddlecloths.

21. Arabia. Here used in the limited sense given to it elsewhere in the Scriptures (2 Chron. 9:14; Isa. 21:13; Jer. 25:24), namely, the northern desert portion of the country occupied by nomadic tribes.

Kedar. The name of one of the nomadic tribes descended from Ishmael (Gen. 25:13; cf. Isa. 60:7).

22. Sheba. Descendants of Cush, the son of Ham (see Gen. 10:7). Their territory was in southwestern Arabia and included Yemen. It was the land of the queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, and it was noted even then for its spices and gold (1 Kings 10:1, 2, 10; Ps. 72:10, 15; Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20; see on Gen. 10:7).

Raamah. Believed to be a southern Arabian tribe (see on Gen. 10:7).

23. Haran. The prophet turns from Arabia to Mesopotamia. Haran, where Abraham lived for a time (Gen. 12:4), was in northwestern Mesopotamia on the Balikh River at the crossroads of two great caravan routes.

Canneh. Site unknown, but probably near Haran.

Eden. A district along the Euphrates south of Haran (see 2 Kings 19:12; Isa. 37:12).

Sheba. This is the same Sheba as mentioned earlier (v. 22). The name is probably out of its order here. It does not appear in the LXX.

Asshur. The common name for Assyria, but the fact that it is listed here with other cities has led some scholars to identify it with the modern *Qal’ât Sherqât* on the west bank of the Tigris, about 50 mi. south of Nineveh.

Chilmad. An unknown site, probably located not far from the city of Asshur.

24. All sorts of things. Heb. *maklulim*, literally, “perfected things,” perhaps denoting “gorgeous garments.”

Made of cedar. Better, “made secure” (RSV).

25. Ships of Tarshish. For this term, probably designating ships engaged in carrying metals—as from Tarshish, probably in Spain—see on 1 Kings 10:22.

26. Thy rowers. The figure of the ship is here resumed. The vessel is on the high seas, buffeted by the east wind, a treacherous, dangerous wind (see Ps. 48:7). The stately ship is broken by the fierceness of the gale.

27. Thy mariners. The various classes of seamen are enumerated. Together all that made up the might, glory, and wealth of Tyre perished in one great disaster. All were cast into the midst of the sea at the breakup of this mighty ship of state.

28. Suburbs. The word thus translated usually means the open place around a city (see on Joshua 14:4). Here the general surroundings are indicated.

29. All that handle. The merchant world mourns the loss of the gallant ship with all the customary acts of mourning and composes a funeral hymn (vs. 32–36).

CHAPTER 28

1 *God's judgment upon the prince of Tyrus for his sacrilegious pride.* 11 *A lamentation of his great glory corrupted by sin.* 20 *The judgment of Zidon.* 24 *The restoration of Israel.*

1. The word of the Lord. Chapter 28 consists of three sections. The first (vs. 1–10) is a prophecy against the prince of Tyre, whose fall is traced to his insufferable pride and arrogance. The second section (vs. 11–19) is a lamentation upon the king of Tyre. This properly turns out to be a digression to treat of the real ruler of Tyre, namely Satan. The principles governing such a deviation are dealt with in the comments under that section. The third and shortest section (vs. 20–26) is a prophecy against Sidon, the other principal Phoenician city.

2. Prince. Heb. *nagid*, “a chief,” “a leader.” According to Josephus, the Tyrian king at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege was Ethbaal (*Against Apion* i. 21). However, the prophet is doubtless decrying the insolence and inordinate pride of Tyre’s leaders generally.

The seat of God. Probably a reference to the natural beauty and strategic position of Tyre. Some see significance in the phrase from the point of view that the temple of Baal Melkarth was situated there.

3. Wiser than Daniel. Said in irony. Daniel had distinguished himself in the Babylonian court as a man of wisdom and as a revealer of secrets (Dan. 1:20; 2:48; 4:18; 5:11–14; etc.). To such a man the king of Tyre is compared, probably because of his self-satisfied sense of superiority. Some think the Daniel here referred to is the hero by the name of *Dan’el* mentioned in the Ras Shamrah tablets of the 14th century B.C. (see on Eze. 14:14). This seems highly unlikely.

7. Terrible of the nations. Ezekiel elsewhere describes the Babylonian army by this phrase (chs. 30:10, 11; 31:12; 32:12).

8. Deaths. In the Hebrew an intensive plural, signifying a violent death.

9. Shalt be a man. The words “shalt be” are supplied. The present, “art,” as in v. 2, seems to be a more appropriate translation.

10. The uncircumcised. According to Herodotus (ii. 104) the Phoenicians practiced circumcision. Like the Jews, they would regard the uncircumcised with disdain.

12. King of Tyrus. Verses 11–19, though presented as a dirge upon the king of Tyrus, can hardly be limited in its application to the Tyrian prince. The imagery so far transcends such a local reference that designations such as “extreme irony” fail to answer the problems created if a wholly local application is given to the passage.

The following statements seem particularly difficult to apply to any literal “king of Tyrus”: (1) “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God,” v. 13; (2) “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; . . . thou was upon the holy mountain of God,” v. 14; (3) “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee,” v. 15; (4) “I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub,” v. 16. It seems that as Ezekiel beheld the character and activities of the literal king of Tyre in vision, Inspiration lifted the veil between the seen and the unseen and the prophet was permitted to see the invisible yet powerful being whom the king of Tyre served. Similarly, Isaiah had been permitted to see beyond the literal king of Babylon (ch. 14:4) to Satan, whose character and policies the king of Babylon carried out (vs. 12–16).

It thus appears simpler to consider the passage as digressing from the prophecy upon the prince of Tyre to present a history of him who was indeed the real king of Tyrus, Satan himself. So understood, this passage provides us with a history of the origin, initial position, and downfall of the angel who later became known as the devil and Satan. Apart from this passage and the one in Isa. 14:12–14, we would be left without a reasonably complete account of the origin, primeval state, and causes of the fall of the prince of evil. The NT references to this being (Luke 4:5, 6; 10:18; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7–9; etc.), though fully consistent with these ancient prophecies, in themselves do not supply the complete history.

It was the Holy Spirit who planned and unified the Scriptures, and it was He who saw to it that sufficient information was given on all essential matters, including the history of Satan. Furthermore, it was He who determined when, how, and by whom the revelation should be given. The occasion under consideration was especially appropriate in that the prince of Tyrus had so remarkably imitated the example of his true leader, the devil. In the light of the great controversy, Tyre, together with all heathen nations, was controlled by the principles of this great rebel leader, and his influence in their history needed to be appropriately exposed.

For a discussion of the history of the origin and destiny of Satan see PP 33–43 and GC 492–504.

Sealest up the sum. The word translated “sum” is found only here and in ch. 43:10, where it is rendered “pattern.” An alternative translation of the clause is, “You set a seal to your completeness.” The general meaning is clear. Lucifer was clothed with wisdom, glory, and beauty above all other angels.

13. Eden. Here to be taken in its larger sense as the dwelling place of God (see PP 35). The context shows that Lucifer had not yet fallen. The creation of our earth, the placement of our first parents in Eden, occurred subsequent to his fall (see PP 36; 3SG 33; 1SP 23; EW 146).

Every precious stone. The stones named here are found also in the list of the gems on the high priest’s breastplate Ex. 28:17–20; 39:8–14. However, the order in which they are named is not the same. Furthermore, three are not named. In the LXX the two lists are identical. The enumeration of these various jewels emphasizes the exalted position of him who, next to Christ, was most honored in heaven.

Tabrets. Heb. *tuppin*, singular *toph*, generally a small drum (see Vol. III, p. 30).

Some think that *toph* refers to the “drum,” or hollow, in which a gem is set.

Pipes. Heb. *neqobim*, a word of uncertain meaning, defined by some as mines. Others think the word refers to the cavities in which jewels are set. If the latter meaning is correct, the passage describes the gorgeous background in which the precious stones were fixed. On the other hand, the mention of musical instruments is consistent with Lucifer’s being the leader of the heavenly choir (see 1SP 28, 29).

Thou wast created. Because he was a created being Lucifer was distinctly inferior to the Father and the Son, in whom was life original, unborrowed, and underived. However, it was with the Son that Lucifer claimed equality. When God said to His Son, “Let us make man in our image,” Satan was jealous of Jesus (see EW 145). He wished to be consulted in the formation of man. In thus aspiring to the power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield, he fell from his exalted position, and became the

devil. It is incorrect to say that God created the devil. God created a beautiful angel, holy and undefiled, but this angel made a devil out of himself.

14. Anointed cherub. The original position of Satan is illustrated by the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat in the Jewish Temple. Lucifer, the covering cherub, stood in the light of the presence of God. He was the highest of all created beings, and foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe (see DA 758).

Holy mountain. Here representing the seat of God's government, heaven itself, figuratively represented as a mountain (see on Ps. 48:2).

Stones of fire. The presence of God is often presented as in an environment of color and fire (see Rev. 4:3). When the Lord appeared to Moses, Aaron, and the ancients, His feet were shown resting upon paved work of a sapphire stone (Ex. 24:10). These various details are mentioned to emphasize the contrast between the original privileges and the subsequent fate of Lucifer.

15. Till iniquity was found. The nature of the sin that led to the banishment of Satan from heaven is given full discussion in PP 33–43 and GC 492–504.

16. Multitude of thy merchandise. The imagery is drawn from the trade of Tyre. The figure of the king of Tyre is not lost. Lucifer's nefarious work of disseminating rebellion in heaven is compared to the avaricious and often dishonest trade of Tyre.

I will destroy thee. This is the reading of our Hebrew text. According to certain translations that follow the LXX, the covering cherub is the one who expels Lucifer, as, for example, the RSV, which reads, "And the guardian cherub drove you out." The change is unnecessary and unwarranted and obscures the fact that Satan was "the covering cherub" (DA 758). In Rev. 12:7–9, Michael (Christ, see on Dan. 10:13) is described as the leader of the forces expelling the archrebel from heaven.

17. Lifted up. On the cause of Lucifer's downfall see references listed in comments on v. 15.

18. Thy sanctuaries. Many Hebrew manuscripts and some of the versions read "sanctuary." The obvious reference is to the holy place of heaven itself, which was defiled by the inception of sin.

Bring thee to ashes. The destruction of Satan is presented in the figure of the burning up of Tyre and her king. Actually, the annihilation of the instigator of evil will be accomplished by the fires that, in the last day, will remove every vestige of sin and purify the earth for the future abode of the righteous (Rev. 20:14, 15; 21:1).

19. Shall be astonished. This must be left in the figure. Satan long survives all other sinners in the lake of fire (see EW 294, 295). The righteous within the city will witness the renovating fires.

Never shalt thou be any more. This statement provides the assurance that sin, once eradicated, will never again mar God's universe (see Nahum 1:9). By allowing rebellion to ripen fully, God has secured the future. The inhabitants of God's vast universe have developed a spiritual immunity against evil that secures them against future transgression. The results of apostasy from God's government are fully known. All are convinced of the justice, benevolence, and wisdom of God's character. Never will sin disrupt the perfect harmony that pervades God's re-created earth.

21. Zidon. The Phoenician city of Sidon (see on ch. 27:8).

22. I will be glorified. God would be vindicated as the one who has the destiny of the nations under His control (see Ed 174–178; see on Dan. 4:17).

23. By the sword. After Nebuchadnezzar's siege and partial victory over Tyre, Sidon became the leading Phoenician state. Later, Cambyses brought the city under Persian domination (c. 526 B.C.). A revolt in about 351 B.C. led to the destruction of the city. Later, Sidon surrendered to Alexander, and still later came under the domination of Rome.

24. Pricking brier. A figure probably borrowed from Num. 33:55, there applied to the Canaanites at large.

25. Sanctified in them. According to God's plan, those nations that had been a source of provocation to their neighbors, particularly to the Jews, would be made powerless, and the people of God, brought back from captivity, would enjoy their former privileges. The surrounding nations would acknowledge the supremacy of Jehovah.

26. Shall build houses. Compare Isa. 65:9, 10; Jer. 30:18; Jer. 32:41. This pictures the ideal state that God planned for restored Israel. Had His people followed out His designs for them, they would have dwelt safely in the houses of their own construction and have eaten freely of the vineyards of their own planting, with no fear of ever again having them destroyed. However, even the severe discipline of the Captivity failed to bring the spiritual regeneration that would be necessary to ensure God's carrying out His promise.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 DA 763; GC 494

6–8 GC 672

7 PK 515, 522

12 CT 27; DA 758

12–15 GC 494; FE 175, 331; PP 35

14, 15 CT 27

16 DA 763

16–19 GC 672

17 GC 494; PP 35; 4T 422

17–19 FE 175, 332

18, 19 GC 504

19 DA 763

CHAPTER 29

1 *The judgment of Pharaoh for his treachery to Israel.* 8 *The desolation of Egypt.* 13 *The restoration thereof after forty years.* 17 *Egypt the reward of Nebuchadrezzar.* 21 *Israel shall be restored.*

1. In the tenth year. Of Jehoiachin's captivity (see on ch. 1:2). The month date here given is Jan., 587 (see p. 572). The prophecy may have been delivered shortly after the time the Babylonians temporarily lifted the siege of Jerusalem because of the approach of the Egyptians under Hophra (Jer. 37:5, 11). Jeremiah had prophesied the failure of that attempt (ch. 37:6–10). The news of these events may have stimulated the exiles to fresh hope in the deliverance of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel's prophecy against Egypt may have found its occasion in these circumstances.

3. Pharaoh. On the significance of this title see on Gen. 12:15. The Pharaoh now on the throne was Hophra, the Apries of the Greeks, 589–570 B.C. (Vol. II, p. 91).

The great dragon. Heb. *tannim*, “jackals.” However, a number of Hebrew manuscripts read *tannin*, “a dragon.” The latter reading would suggest the crocodile, a characteristic animal of Egypt.

My river. According to Herodotus (ii. 170), Apries boasted that he was so well established that not even a god could dispossess him of his power. The monuments of Egypt bear full testimony of the pompous pride of the Pharaohs.

4. Hooks in thy jaws. Herodotus (ii. 70) describes how the Egyptians caught the Nile crocodiles with baited hooks. God would break the stubborn pride of this boastful monarch.

Fish of thy rivers. Probably representing the Egyptian armies, or Egypt’s allies. Pharaoh was not to perish alone. He would involve others in a common ruin with him.

5. Open fields. Thrown into the open fields, they would be devoured by the birds and beasts of prey. Egypt was to be given over for a spoil.

6. A staff of reed. The figure is local. Reeds grew abundantly on the banks of the Nile (see Ex. 2:3). God had long since warned against placing trust in Egyptian aid (Isa. 30:6, 7; Isa. 31:3; Jer. 2:36; cf. 2 Kings 18:21; cf. Isa. 36:6). Zedekiah’s league with Egypt was doomed to dismal failure (Jer. 37:5–7).

8. Bring a sword. Israel suffered for trusting in Egypt against God’s direct command. Egypt too would suffer for her perfidious mischief.

10. Tower. Heb. *Migdol*, here a proper name and the phrase should read, “from Migdol to Syene.” Several sites on the eastern Delta seem to have borne this name. If the Migdol here is the one mentioned by Jeremiah it is probably the modern *Tell el-Heir* south of Pelusium (see Jer. 44:1; 46:14).

Syene. A town on the extreme southern border of Egypt, represented by the modern *Aswân* (sometimes spelled Assuan), which is situated near its ruins. The two towns, Migdol and Syene, represent the northern and southern extremities of the land.

11. Forty years. The state of desolation described in vs. 9–12 must be understood comparatively. The language is that of a poetic prophet who must not be denied the use of the powerful figure of hyperbole. History records no utter depopulation, and no such 40-year period is known.

13. Gather the Egyptians. Unlike Tyre, and other Canaanitish states and later Babylon, Egypt was to have a revival. It is difficult to determine what historical event is here forecast.

14. Pathros. A transliteration of the Hebrew form of the Egyptian *Pa’-ta’-rešy* and the Akkadian *Paturisi*, the region of Upper Egypt.

15. The basest. Meaning, “the lowliest.” Historically this has been fulfilled. Egypt came under foreign domination a little over half a century after this time, and though she has survived all her foreign rulers, she has never risen to her former greatness and prestige.

16. The confidence. God’s people had repeatedly transgressed by looking to Egypt for aid (2 Kings 17:4; 23:35; Isa. 30:2, 3; cf. ch. 36:4, 6). This temptation would be entirely removed.

17. The seven and twentieth year. Of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2); the month date falls in April, 571 or 570 (see p. 572). This is the latest date appearing in

Ezekiel. The message of vs. 17–21 was evidently placed here in order that all the prophecies concerning Egypt might appear together.

18. Yet had he no wages. The 13-year siege of Tyre ended in 573. Nebuchadnezzar failed to conquer the island city (see on ch. 26:7). The siege of Tyre is here represented as a service to God for which Nebuchadnezzar had not been duly rewarded.

19. Unto Nebuchadnezzar. Cuneiform tablets of Nebuchadnezzar tell of a campaign against Egypt in the king's 37th year (see J. B. Pritchard, editor, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 308). The tablet is broken off, so that the complete account of the campaign is not known. This is believed to be the event here referred to by Ezekiel. For a more complete discussion of the historical aspects of the problem see on Jer. 46:13; see also Vol. III, p. 46. For a discussion of the variant spelling, "Nebuchadnezzar," see on Dan. 1:1.

21. Horn. A symbol of power (see Deut. 33:17; Ps. 92:10). When Israel would learn to put her trust in God alone, rather than in an earthly power, such as Egypt, that horn that had been cut off would begin to sprout again.

Opening of the mouth. Probably not a reference to the enforced silence of ch. 24:27, but to the prophet's work as teacher of the people.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3, 6 PK 454

CHAPTER 30

2

1 *The desolation of Egypt and her helpers. 20 The arm of Babylon shall be strengthened to break the arm of Egypt.*

1. The word of the Lord. Chapter 30 consists of two separate prophecies against Egypt: (1) vs. 1–9, undated, but probably belonging to the preceding prophecy of ch. 29:17–21; (2) vs. 20–26, definitely dated, and given about three months after the prophecy of ch. 29:1–16 if Ezekiel began the year in the spring, or a year and three months if he counted from the fall.

2. Woe worth the day! Literally, "Alas for the day!"

3. The day of the Lord. See on Isa. 2:12.

Time of the heathen. Or, "time of the nations." God keeps an account with the nations. He determines when their cup of iniquity is full (see 5T 208, 524; 7T 141; 9T 13; see on Dan. 4:17).

4. Multitude. Heb. *hamon*, also meaning "wealth," or "abundance," and preferably so translated here.

5. Ethiopia. Heb. *Kush*. The Cushites inhabited Nubia, which included part of the present Sudan (see on Gen. 10:6).

Libya. Heb. *Put* (see on ch. 27:10, there translated Phut).

Lydia. Lud (see on Gen. 10:13; Jer. 46:9; cf. Eze. 27:10).

The mingled people. Compare Jer. 25:20. The expression probably applies to the foreign mercenaries in the Egyptian army or to foreigners generally.

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 21:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Chub. This name is unknown geographically. Various conjectures as to its identity have been made and various changes in the text proposed to make it into a known country. The LXX reads “Persians and Cretans” in place of “Ethiopia” and omits Chub. It probably describes one of Egypt’s allies.

Men of the land that is in league. Literally, “sons of the land of the covenant.” The LXX reads “they of the children of my covenant.” If the LXX reading is correct, the reference is possibly to the Jews who had sought refuge in Egypt after the murder of Gedaliah (Jer. 42–44). Jeremiah had told them that the sword and famine they were attempting to flee would overtake them there (Jer. 42:16–18).

6. That uphold Egypt. Probably Egypt’s allies and supporters. Some think the foundations of v. 4 are referred to.

From the tower of Syene. Better, “from Migdol to Syene” (see on ch. 29:10).

7. Desolate. Compare ch. 29:12.

8. Know that I am the Lord. This clause is a constant refrain throughout the book of Ezekiel. It is a statement of the great objective of God, namely, to bring a saving knowledge of Himself to all mankind. He employs various means of declaring His counsels to the human race. He speaks through the voice of conscience, through inspired prophets, and through His providences and judgments. His ultimate aim is to have a knowledge of His name cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). The inspired message against Egypt may be regarded as God’s attempt to reveal the divine solicitude for Egypt’s vast multitudes. See on ch. 6:7.

9. Messengers. Either the fleeing Egyptians who, arriving in Ethiopia, alarmed its population with the news of Egypt’s fall, or a special envoy sent to warn the Ethiopians.

Careless. Heb. *beṭach*, “secure,” “unsuspecting.”

10. The multitude of Egypt. Or, “wealth of Egypt” (see on v. 4).

Hand of Nebuchadrezzar. See on ch. 29:19.

12. Rivers. Heb. *ye’orim*, from the later Egyptian *irw*, “the Nile.” *Ye’orim*, is a plural form and may be used to describe the Nile with its branches and network of canals.

13. Noph. A transliteration of the Heb. *Noph*, a contraction of the Egyptian *Mnnfr*, modern Memphis (see on Jer. 2:16).

A prince of the land. Literally, “a prince from the land.” The Heb. *‘od*, here translated “no more,” does not necessarily denote unending perpetuity (see on ch. 26:14). The expression could mean either that for a long time there should be no prince from the land of Egypt, or, by understanding the passage relatively, that there should be no more a native prince possessing the power of former kings.

14. Pathros. For comment see on ch. 29:14.

Zoan. Identified with the modern village of *Ṣân el-Ḥagar* on the Tanitic branch of the Nile (see on Isa. 30:4). Many temple buildings and monuments have there been excavated, and royal tombs of the Twenty-second Dynasty discovered.

No. Another name for Thebes, a city on the east bank of the Nile about 310 mi. (496 km.) south of Cairo (see on Jer. 46:25).

15. Sin. Heb. *Sin*. No Egyptian city of this name is known, but it may be the same as Pelusium, or was probably in the vicinity of that town. Pelusium was a frontier town, strongly fortified and considered rightly as the key to Egypt, and hence called in the text

its “strength.” Many important battles were fought there. It was also close to the sea, and is believed to be *Tell ei-Farā*, 14 mi. (22.4 km.) east of the Suez Canal.

17. *Aven*. The same as On of Gen. 41:45, 50 (the place from which Joseph’s wife came), and as Beth-shemesh (house of the sun) of Jer. 43:13, the Heliopolis (city of the sun) of the Greeks, so called because from the remotest times it was the chief seat of Egyptian sun worship.

***Pi-beseth*.** A town in the Delta, about 52 mi. (c. 83 km.) northeast of Memphis, now *Tell Basta*. It was the center of the worship of the cat-headed goddess, Bastet, who was worshiped with disgusting orgies (see Herodotus ii. 66). A cemetery for cats has been found on this ancient site, which now exists only in ruins. The town is more commonly known under the name Bubastis.

18. *Tehaphnehes*. Or, Tahpanhes, a town about 23 mi. (37 km.) southwest of Pelusium (see on Jer. 2:16; Eze. 30:15). This is the city to which the Jews fled after the murder of Gedaliah. As a sign of the destruction of the remnant in Egypt, Jeremiah was commanded to hide stones in the entry of Pharaoh’s house in Tahpanhes to mark the spot where Nebuchadnezzar was to spread his pavilion (Jer. 43:9–11). Excavations at the site by W. M. Flinders Petrie in 1886 disclosed a platform of brickwork, which some have identified with high probability as the place where Jeremiah hid his stones. Tahpanhes was called Daphnae by the classical writers and is now known as *Tell Defenneh*.

***Darkened*.** A common prophetic symbol describing coming calamity (see Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31; Joel 3:15; Amos 8:9).

20. *In the eleventh year*. Of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2). The month date falls in April, 587 or 586 B.C. (see p. 572). Compare ch. 29:1; see p. 347.

21. *Pharaoh king of Egypt*. Hophra, or Apries (589–570 B.C.), a man of enterprise and military genius (see Vol. II, p. 91).

23. *Scatter the Egyptians*. For the historical fulfillment of vs. 23, 24 see on ch. 29:19.

26. *Know that I am the Lord*. See on v. 8.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

25 PK 454

CHAPTER 31

1 *A relation unto Pharaoh, 3 of the glory of Assyria, 10 and the fall thereof for pride. 18 The like destruction of Egypt.*

1. *The eleventh year*. Of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2); the month date falls in June, 587 or 586 (see p. 572). The present prophecy was given about two months after the previous one ch. 30:20). In prophetic allegory and in stirring poetic parallel the prophet describes the fall of the great nation of Egypt.

2. *Pharaoh*. Hophra, or Apries, noted for his arrogant pride (see on ch. 29:3).

***The Assyrian*.** Heb. *’Ashshur*, “Assyria.” A change of one letter of the consonantal Hebrew and a change in pointing to *’ashweka* give the reading “I will liken thee.” The sentence would then read, “Behold, I will liken thee to a cedar in Lebanon” (see RSV). However, we cannot be sure that such changes are justified. It is possible to understand the allegory if the reference to Assyria is retained. The history and downfall of Assyria would then be set forth as an example of the history and overthrow of Egypt. With the change in the text the application would be direct.

A cedar. For similar imagery see Isa. 10:34; 37:24; Eze. 17:3; Dan. 4:20–22; Zech. 11:1, 2.

4. Waters made him great. The LXX reads, “The waters nourished him.” The reference is either to the Nile or to the Tigris, depending upon what interpretation is adopted (see on v. 3).

6. Fowls of heaven. Compare Eze. 17:23; Dan. 4:21.

8. Garden of God. The LXX reads “the paradise of God.” The figure seems to be drawn from the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 2:8; Eze. 31:9). By poetic hyperbole the prophet describes the pretended greatness of Egypt. The garden of God may here represent Israel as the people of God.

10. Lifted up thyself. See on ch. 29:3.

11. The mighty one. That is, Nebuchadnezzar (see on ch. 29:19)

12. Have left him. Compare ch. 29:5.

13. Upon his ruin. Compare ch. 29:5.

14. Exalt themselves. This is the lesson to be drawn from the parable. Let not the other trees rely on their own strength and be infatuated with prosperity.

15. Grave. Heb. *she’ol*, *hadēs* in the LXX, the figurative abode of the dead, represented as a subterranean cavern (see on Prov. 15:11).

16. Hell. Heb. *she’ol* (see on v. 15).

17. Slain with the sword. The reality breaks through the figure.

His arm. His auxiliaries, those who helped him in his conquests.

18. This is Pharaoh. The allegory is applied.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3–9PK 363

8 PP 450

10–16PK 365

18 PK 366

CHAPTER 32

1 *A lamentation for the fearful fall of Egypt.* 11 *The sword of Babylon shall destroy it.* 17 *It shall be brought down to hell; among all the uncircumcised nations.*

1. Twelfth year. Of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2), that is, 585 B.C. The month date would be in the spring of 585 by either spring or fall reckoning (see p. 572).

Jerusalem had been overthrown by this time, having fallen in July of the preceding year.

This chapter closes the series of prophecies against Egypt. Verses 1–16 are a further denunciation of Egypt under the figure of a dragon. Verses 17–32 are a dirge over Egypt’s descent into *she’ol*.

2. Thou art like a young lion. Better, “Thou didst liken thyself unto a young lion.” As the lion is the king of beasts, so Pharaoh believed himself to be a great world leader.

Whale. Heb. *tannim*, according to several manuscripts *tannin*, “dragon,” hence perhaps the crocodile (see on ch. 29:3).

3. Spread out my net. Compare ch. 29:4.

4. All the fowls. Compare ch. 29:5.

6. Water with thy blood. A graphic picture of extensive slaughter.

7. Cover the heaven. A symbol of destruction and mourning.

10. They shall tremble. The rehearsal of Egypt's tragic fate will paralyze the people of other lands with fear. They will fear that the sword that prostrated Egypt will be brandished against them.

12. Terrible of the nations. Compare ch. 30:11. A fitting description of the Babylonian scourge that swept over nation after nation.

13. All the beasts. That is, the cattle along the Nile. Perhaps by poetic figure they represent the restless activity of Egyptian life.

14. Make their waters deep. Literally, "cause their waters to sink down," here meaning to permit the sediment to settle so that the waters become clear. The LXX reads, "Thus shall their waters then be at rest." The cattle would no more disturb the water with their feet (see v. 13). In other words, the busy scene of Egyptian life and activity would cease.

Like oil. That is, smoothly; undisturbed by cattle and men.

16. Daughters of the nations. In the ancient Near East, women were hired to perform formal acts of mourning (see 2 Sam. 1:24; 2 Chron. 35:25; Jer. 9:17). For further comment on this typically Oriental custom see on Jer. 9:17; Mark 5:38.

17. Fifteenth day. The month is not mentioned in the Hebrew, but if this section belongs after vs. 1–16, it could hardly be in any other month than the 12th, the same as that mentioned in v. 1. In that case, the present message came only two weeks after the previous one. The LXX reads, "in the twelfth year, in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the month." This would put this message earlier than the former. If it was uttered earlier, it was probably placed here because of its similarity in thought.

18. Nether parts. That is, *she'ol* (see on v. 21), conceived of as in the lower parts of the earth (see on ch. 31:15). For further comment on *she'ol* as the figurative realm of the dead see on Prov. 15:11.

19. The uncircumcised. Circumcision was practiced in Egypt even before the Hebrews were there. To lie with the uncircumcised would be considered the height of indignity.

21. Shall speak. The various nations are represented as lying together in *she'ol*, and in figure as carrying on a conversation. For another prophetic use of this graphic figure of speech see comments on "the king of Babylon," in Isa. 14:4, 15–19.

Him. The masculine is used when the reference is to the king. The feminine pronoun designates the kingdom.

Hell. Heb. *she'ol* (see on ch. 31:15).

22. Asshur. Assyria, an ancient nation (see on Gen. 10:11). The fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. was still fresh in the memory of the people.

24. Elam. A nation occupying the highlands east of Babylonia which lost its independence to the Assyrians and was later dominated by the Babylonians (see on Jer. 49:34).

26. Meshech. The classic *Moshians*, the *Mushku* of the Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:2).

Tubal. The *Tibarenians* of Herodotus and the *Tabalaeans* of Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:2).

27. *They shall not lie.* The LXX and Syriac omit the negative, which seems to give the passage better sense. The former translates the sentence, “And they are laid with the giants that fell of old.”

28. *Thou shalt be broken.* Compare v. 19. Ezekiel returns to address Pharaoh, to remind him that he must prepare himself for the same doom that had befallen other nations.

29. *Edom.* See on ch. 25:12.

30. *Princes of the north.* Perhaps chieftains of Syria are meant.

Zidonians. A name frequently used for the Phoenicians generally. For comment on the racial origins of the Phoenicians in general and the Sidonians in particular see on Gen. 10:15, 18; see also Vol. II, pp. 67–69.

31. *Shall be comforted.* Pharaoh’s hollow consolation would be to see other great and wealthy nations prostrate in the dust as he was. For comment on an earlier humiliation of the pride of Egypt see on Ex. 14:23–31; 15:1–27.

CHAPTER 33

¹ *According to the duty of a watchman, in warning the people, 7 Ezekiel is admonished of his duty. 10 God sheweth the justice of his ways towards the penitent, and towards revolvers. 17 He maintaineth his justice. 21 Upon the news of the taking of Jerusalem he prophesieth the desolation of the land. 30 God’s judgment upon the mockers of the prophets.*

1. *The word of the Lord.* The prophecy (vs. 1–20) is not dated, but from the circumstances related in vs. 21, 22 it seems reasonable to suppose that it was given the evening before the arrival of the messenger bringing the news of Jerusalem’s downfall.

2. *Children of thy people.* A new phase of Ezekiel’s ministry begins, and there is a renewal of the charge of office.

Set him for their watchman. Compare ch. 3:17. On the function of the watchman see Sam. 18:24, 25; 2 Kings 9:17; Hab 2:1. On Eze. 33:2–9 see on ch. 3:17–19.

3. *Blow the trumpet.* See Hosea 5:8; Amos 3:6.

10. *How should we then live?* The mood of Ezekiel’s hearers has changed. Earlier the prophet had met with unbelief and derision (ch. 12:22). The people had tried to excuse their sin by asserting that they were suffering the punishment, not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers (ch. 18:2). With the doom of Jerusalem certain, they could no longer gainsay the prophet’s words. In abject despair they say, in effect, “If all this is in punishment for our sins, what hope is there for us?”

11. *I have no pleasure.* Ezekiel cheers his countrymen with the assurance that God has no pleasure in their death. He desires that all should repent and live (2 Peter 3:9). He plans that the punishment of the captivity shall be salutary and lead to repentance. He warns that no previous righteousness will cover present transgression (v. 12). At the same time no wickedness will exclude the sinner from present grace.

12. *The righteousness of the righteous.* Verses 12–20 briefly summarize the teaching of ch. 18 on the subject of individual responsibility. See comments there.

21. *In the twelfth year.* That is, of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2). We cannot be certain what system of year reckoning was followed by Ezekiel. Many scholars believe that he used the spring-to-spring reckoning such as was current in Babylon, though it is possible that he followed the Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning. There is

uncertainty also as to whether the years of Jehoiachin's captivity should be counted by inclusive reckoning (see Vol. II, pp. 136, 137) or noninclusively.

If the years of the captivity are reckoned noninclusively, by either the spring-to-spring or the fall-to-fall year, the 5th day of the 10th month can be dated in Jan., 585, about six months after the fall of the city in July, 586. (But if the years are counted inclusively, the arrival of the bad news must be dated in Jan., 586, which is too early if Jerusalem fell in July, 586.) For 586 as the year of the city's fall, see Vol. II, pp. 160, 161; for 587, held by some, see Vol. III, pp. 92, 93.

22. *Was upon me.* Perhaps better, "The hand of the Lord had [already] been upon me."

Opened my mouth. See on ch. 24:27.

23. *Then the word.* Verses 23–29 constitute a new section of the prophecy delivered, perhaps, immediately after the arrival of the fugitive, although an interval may have elapsed. No dates are given for the prophecies beginning here and extending to the end of ch. 39. Chapters 40–48 are dated about 12 years after the fall of Jerusalem. It is probable that the present series came at intervals during this 12-year period (see p. 572).

24. *Inhabit those wastes.* According to 2 Kings 25:12, 22; Jer. 52:16, the poor of the people were left in the land for vine-dressers and for husbandmen, and these were joined by fugitive Jews from surrounding countries. The present address is designed to combat a saying current among this group.

Abraham was one. These words express the arrogant assertions of those whom the Babylonians had left in the land. They declared, in effect, "If Abraham, being alone, was given possession of the land, we, being many, can certainly lay claim to the land, and take possession of the estates of the exiles." In reply the prophet intimated that descent from Abraham would prove no advantage. God was interested in character qualifications. The fact that they were many had no bearing on the question.

Many today trust in their connection with some church organization, instead of seeking holiness of heart, which alone will enable them to stand in the last day. They place their confidence in numbers and popularity. In the last analysis, true religion is a personal matter, and each one must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Connection with the organized church is the natural and expected result of a genuine personal experience. But this alone is no ground for one's hope.

25. *Ye eat with the blood.* See Gen. 9:4; cf. Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10–14; Deut. 12:16. The people who were left in the land showed no disposition to depart from the sins of their fathers. Jer. 42 and 43 are a sad commentary on their open rebellion against the express commands of God.

26. *Stand upon your sword.* They relied on their deeds of violence for their support. Assassinations were common (see Jer. 49).

27. *In the wastes.* Three plagues are here enumerated, the sword (of the Babylonians or of plundering outlaws), evil beasts, and pestilence. Compare similar enumerations in Eze. 5:12; 14:12–21; cf. Lev. 26:22, 25.

29. *I am the Lord.* See on chs. 6:7; 30:8.

30. *The children.* Verses 30–33 apply to those in exile. Their number had increased with the arrival of fresh captives. The prophet is warned not to be deceived by the outward deference of the people.

Against thee. Rather, “of thee,” or “about thee.” The people were not opposed to Ezekiel. They were enjoying his oratory. The prophet had probably not had so large or so promising a congregation before. He is warned that the people were merely hearers, not doers, of the word (see Matt. 7:21–27; James 1:22–25).

32. A very lovely song. Literally, “a song of loves,” or “a song of lovers.” They assembled as if to hear some concert singer.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–33TM 416

1–95T 15

6, 7 TM 468; 3T 452; 7T 254; 9T 29

6–95T 687, 715

7, 8 7T 140, 8T 195

7–9AA 360; GC 460; GW 14; TM 292; 4T 403; 9T 19

8 TM 406

8, 9 GC 330; 3T 195

9 2T 54

11 COL 123; CS 224; DA 582; GC 535, 627, 642; MB 217; PK 105, 127, 326; PP 628; 2T 225, 295

13–165T 629

13–20TM 292

15 SC 44, 63; 5T 631

15, 16 CS 87, 98, 100; DA 556

17 5T 631

30–32Ed 259

31 COL 411

31, 32 MB 209

CHAPTER 34

1 *A reproof of the shepherds.* 7 *God’s judgment against them.* 11 *His providence for his flock.* 20 *The kingdom of Christ.*

1. The word of the Lord. A new prophecy in which the unfaithful shepherds are denounced. God promises to remove His flock from them and appoint David as His shepherd instead (v. 23). The land will be restored to full fruitfulness. The message of the chapter is similar to that of Jer. 23:1–8.

2. Shepherds. Heb. *ro’im*, from the root *ra’ah*, “to pasture,” “to feed.” It is used metaphorically of responsible rulers or leaders (see 1 Kings 22:17; Jer. 2:8).

Feed themselves. The shepherd ought to do that which his name implies. The charge is probably directed specifically at Judah’s later kings.

3. Fat. Heb. *cheleb*. A slightly different vowel pointing to *chalab* gives the meaning “milk.” This is the reading of the LXX and Vulgate. Either meaning fits the context. The rulers levied exorbitant taxes.

4. That which was lost. See Jer. 50:6; cf. Matt. 18:11–14; Luke 15; compare the parable of the lost sheep (see on Luke 15:3–7).

Force and with cruelty. Compare Ex. 1:13, 14; Lev. 25:43.

5. No shepherd. The rulers are blamed for the disaster that had befallen Israel. Their evil example had caused the people to depart from the way of righteousness. This does

not mean, of course, that the people were free from sin. No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must first be gained. It is by his own choice that he follows the evil example of others.

6. *My sheep.* The pronoun indicates that God claims the people as His own.

8. *My shepherds.* They were the ones appointed over God's flock and hence responsible to God.

10. *Against the shepherds.* The first act of judgment was to be the removal of the self-seeking shepherds.

11. *Thus saith the Lord.* The rich promises of vs. 12–31 describe conditions as they might have been if Israel had met the necessary conditions. The prophecies were partially fulfilled at the time of the return from exile. But because the Jews failed to seek a true spiritual experience, either in the Exile or subsequently, the degree of fulfillment was extremely limited. Later, when Israel rejected her Messiah, the nation forever forfeited all claim to the blessings here promised. These promises were then transferred to the Christian church and were to be fulfilled in principle in connection with this spiritual body. A local, political kingdom would no longer form the center of the spiritual kingdom. The new adherents would be scattered in all lands. Their capital would no longer be an earthly Jerusalem; instead, they were to anticipate a heavenly. In their spiritual application these verses will be fulfilled in the new heavens and the new earth. They would have met a literal fulfillment after the Jews returned from Babylonian exile if they had met the conditions God set down (see pp. 29–32).

14. *Good pasture.* If the conditions of repentance and spiritual revival had been met, the Lord would have restored Palestine to its original productiveness as a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8, 17; Num. 13:27; etc.). He would have sent the rain in due season and blessed His people in "basket and . . . store" as He had promised to do formerly (Deut. 28:1–14). At the time of the original entry into Canaan the fulfillment had been prevented by a failure of the people to comply with the necessary conditions. Here, now, was a second opportunity to inherit the same rich promises. Israel was offered a fresh start. Would the nation now prove willing?

16. *Destroy the fat.* Fatness was a symbol of prosperity. Prosperity often leads to forgetfulness of God (Deut. 32:15). The unfaithful shepherds had waxed fat by robbing the flock. They had fed themselves instead of the flock. Now they are to be fed "with judgment."

17. *Between cattle and cattle.* Literally, "between sheep and sheep." God will judge between the various members of the flock. Not all will share in the restoration—only those who repent and turn to God, their Shepherd (see Eze. 34:20, 22; cf. Matt. 25:31–46).

18. *Foul the residue.* The false shepherds are charged with wantonness and waste. That which they did not use they spoiled so as to make it of no use to others.

23. *One shepherd.* Doubtless in contrast with the many rulers who had gone before, and probably also with reference to the two kingdoms of Israel, which were to be reunited.

My servant David. Commentators have generally taken this prediction to refer to the Messiah (Jer. 23:5, 6; Luke 1:32). Because Israel never accepted the conditions on which these promises could be fulfilled, the application is justified. Jesus, coming in the flesh, and later to come in His glory, is the fulfillment this prediction is now to have.

25. *Evil beasts to cease.* At the time of the entrance into Canaan, God had promised to establish the conditions of tranquillity here mentioned (Lev. 26:6). Israel was now given the opportunity to assume once more her role as the center of God's worldwide spiritual kingdom, and as such was promised every temporal advantage (see Eze. 34:14, 26–30).

26. *Showers of blessing.* See Lev. 26:4; Ps. 68:9; Mal. 3:10.

29. *Plant of renown.* Better, “a plantation of renown.”

31. *Flock of my pasture.* The figure is applied. What grace when the God of heaven condescends to have fellowship with men who, like a flock, have wandered far from Him!

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3, 4 Ed 176
4 AA 16; DA 478
4–65T 346
11, 12 7T 230
12 COL 187; 5T 80
15, 16 7T 230
16 DA 477; PP 191
18 EW 37
22 PP 191
23, 25 DA 477
25 EW 18; 1T 68
25, 26 7T 230
26 AA 9; DA 141, 142; MH 103
28 DA 477; PP 191
29–31AA 10
30, 31 7T 230
31 DA 479; GW 181

CHAPTER 35

The judgment of mount Seir for their hatred of Israel.

1. *The word of the Lord.* The prophet is commanded to direct another prophecy against Edom (ch. 25:12–14). Why this further denunciation in the midst of promises of restoration? The prophet takes note of the hindrances in the way of the reoccupation of Palestine. The Edomites had pressed into southern Palestine after Israel had been carried captive. Babylon probably allowed this because Edom seems to have sided against Israel in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem (see on v. 5). The prophet forecasts the complete removal of this hindrance.

2. *Seir.* Heb. *Še'ir*, from a root meaning “to be hairy.” This was the name of the head of a Horite family connected by marriage with Esau, from whom descended the Edomites (see on Gen. 36); it also designates the mountain range east of the Arabah, stretching from the Dead Sea southward. Here it stands poetically for Edom (see Gen. 36:8, 9; Deut. 2:1, 5; 1 Chron. 4:42).

4. *Shalt be desolate.* Some have seen a fulfillment of the present prediction when the Nabateans drove the Edomites into the Negeb in southern Palestine (c. 126 B.C.). However, inasmuch as this prophecy appears in the midst of forecasts of Israel's

restoration, we may assume that it would have met its unique fulfillment in connection with that restoration (see on ch. 25:14).

5. *A perpetual hatred.* This hatred dated from the time of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27:41; cf. Gen. 25:22, 23). At the time of the Exodus, Edom had refused Israel passage through her territory (Num. 20:14–21). After the settlement in Canaan the Edomites had watched with undisguised envy the growing power of Israel. Edom had joined Ammon and Moab against Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:10, 11; cf. Ps. 83:1–8); see Introduction to Ps. 83). It would seem that when the Babylonians took Jerusalem the Edomites assisted them, occupying the gates and stationing themselves at roads leading into the country so as to prevent the escape of fugitives (Obadiah 11–14). In the day of Jerusalem’s calamity the Edomites had fiendishly and vindictively exclaimed, “Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof” (Ps. 137:7).

6. *Unto blood.* Compare Christ’s dictum, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52).

Sith. An archaic word meaning “since.”

7. *Him that passeth.* Compare Zech. 7:14; 9:8, 10

8. *Rivers.* The physical features here mentioned graphically describe the topography of Edom.

9. *Perpetual desolations.* Edom, savagely exulting over the destruction of its rival, and momentarily enjoying an apparent superiority over Israel, stood, nevertheless, at a disadvantage. For Israel there would be a restoration—for Edom only perpetual desolations.

10. *These two countries.* That is, Judah and Israel. Edom’s second sin (cf. v. 5) was the presumptuous claim to the inheritance of Judah and Israel.

Whereas the Lord was there. God had assigned Israel’s possessions as the peculiar inheritance of His people. Even though Israel was momentarily absent from her possessions, God still had an interest in the land and was preserving it for the return of the exiles. When the people later forfeited their privileges (see p. 31), they lost their claim to the land. On the land belonging to Jehovah see Lev. 25:23; Hosea 9:3; Joel 2:18.

11. *Make myself known.* The judgment upon Edom would serve to convince Israel that their God had not utterly abandoned them.

12. *Blasphemies.* Or, “reproaches,” “contumely.”

15. *As thou didst rejoice.* As Edom had rejoiced over Israel’s downfall, so others would rejoice at the eventual overthrow of Edom.

Idumea. Literally, “Edom.” Idumaea is the name used by the Greeks and Romans for the same country. However, by that time the boundaries had been changed somewhat.

I am the Lord. See on ch. 30:8.

CHAPTER 36

¹ *The land of Israel is comforted, both by destruction of the heathen, who spitefully used it, 8 and by the blessings of God promised unto it. 16 Israel was rejected for their sin, 21 and shall be restored without their desert. 25 The blessings of Christ’s kingdom.*

1. *Prophecy.* Ezekiel’s theme now changes from one of judgment upon Israel and the surrounding nations to one of encouragement for his fellow countrymen. Ever since Israel fell, the enemies had had their high day of taunt and jubilation. Such a condition was not to continue. Even though Israel had been humiliated and was now being punished for her rebellion, God still recognized the Jews as His people. The apparent triumph of the

enemies of God's people would be momentary. Though cast down and helpless, Israel would be raised up, more glorious than ever.

Mountains of Israel. The promises of restoration here should be compared with the denunciation of the mountains of Israel in ch. 6.

2. Ancient high places. Heb. *bamoth 'olam*, an expression similar to the *gib'oth 'olam*, "everlasting hills," of Gen. 49:26 and Deut. 33:15. The expression is doubtless synonymous with the "mountains of Israel." The LXX reads "everlasting desolation," as if the Hebrew read *shimemoth 'olam*.

Are our's. Compare chs. 25:3, 8, 15; 26:2; 35:10.

3. In the lips of talkers. Compare Deut. 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; Ps. 44:14.

5. Fire of my jealousy. The same expression is used in Zeph. 3:8; cf. Zeph. 1:18. God attributes human feelings to Himself so that men may understand.

Idumea. Literally, "Edom" (see on ch. 35:15).

7. Lifted up mine hand. The sign of an oath (see ch. 20:5).

Shall bear their shame. Israel had had to bear the shame cast upon her by the heathen (v. 6). Now the heathen would bear their own shame, though not in retaliation. Their shame would come as a result of their own sins. God is no respecter of persons. Sin, wherever found, meets its just retribution. Israel had suffered for her sins, and the heathen nations in turn would suffer for theirs.

8. Shoot forth your branches. The land of Israel, represented by its mountains, was to get ready for the return of the exiles. The grass should spring up as food for the animals, and the trees yield their fruit to feed the new inhabitants. This is a forceful way of representing the certainty that the exiles would return.

At hand. The statement must be understood relatively. Probably about 50 years remained of the 70 predicted by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11).

9. I am for you. God had earlier been represented as against Israel (chs. 5:8; 13:8). This change does not mean a change in God. God had visited Israel with judgment because of her sins; He would bestow grace if she repented.

10. All the house of Israel. God planned the return of both Judah and Israel from captivity. Again there was to be a united, prosperous kingdom, with vineyards replanted, houses rebuilt, and flocks renewed. Such a glorious prospect was held up as a strong inducement to Israel to accept the proffered grace of God, and thus bring about a spiritual revival. These promises were only for a regenerate Israel (see on v. 26).

11. Will do better. These promises of abundant blessing met but meager fulfillment at the return of Israel from exile. God had in mind much more than was ever realized in the postexilic history of Israel (see pp. 26–30).

14. Devour men no more. That is, the land itself, not the people in it (see Num. 13:32). Some have suggested that the heathen surrounding Palestine, who had seen first the Canaanites and then the Israelites uprooted, superstitiously attributed the fate of these nations to something in the land itself. They did not recognize the true cause to be the hand of God guiding the destiny of men and nations. However, in the golden age to which the prophet looked forward, the people would dwell secure. No such reproach should ever again be possible.

16. Word of the Lord. Verses 17–38 form a separate prophecy, yet closely connected with the first part of the chapter. The prophet briefly rehearses Israel's history to show

that the restoration will not be because of any merit on her part, but for the sake of God's name.

17. They defiled it. See Num. 35:34. On the "uncleanness of a removed woman" see Lev. 15:19.

20. Profaned my holy name. The conduct and attendant miseries of the Israelites dishonored Yahweh in the sight of the heathen, who naturally inferred that if this was all that the God of Israel could do for His devotees, He was no better than their own gods. The heathen regarded Yahweh merely as the national God of the Israelites (see Num. 14:16; Jer. 14:9).

21. Pity for mine holy name. That is, He will act for the honor of His name. He will restore His people not merely for their sake, but for His own name's sake.

22. Not this for your sakes. For His own holy name's sake the Lord was going to restore His people (cf. Ex. 32:12–14; Num. 14:13–20). The people were not to feel that they were in any way the favorites of Heaven. God had chosen the nation to be the means of accomplishing His purpose for the salvation of the whole world (see pp. 26–30). With increased privileges came increased responsibilities.

23. Before their eyes. Several Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac read "before your eyes." Either reading makes good sense. The reading "your" brings out the important truth that it would be necessary for God first to be sanctified in the eyes of the people themselves by repentance and reformation, before He would be sanctified in the eyes of the heathen. His name had been "profaned among the heathen" by the unrepresentative lives of His professed people. The restoration of Israel would vindicate His name among the heathen. At that time it would clearly be demonstrated that Yahweh is not like the feeble gods of the heathen, but that He is all-powerful (see Deut. 28:58; Mal. 1:11).

25. Sprinkle clean water. The figure is doubtless drawn from various purifications stipulated in the ceremonial law (see Num. 8:7; 19:9, 17, 18, in which water was employed).

26. A new heart. This verse sets forth the central burden of Ezekiel's teaching. The promises of restoration were conditional upon the spiritual and moral renovation of the people. Ever since Sinai, God had sought to introduce the new-covenant principles, but the people refused to accept them (see on ch. 16:60). They did not understand that without divine grace and a change of heart they could not render the necessary obedience. It was the constant burden of the prophets to lead the people to this higher experience. In the text under consideration, Ezekiel is earnestly pleading with the captives, showing them the only basis for future success. Would they, at length, relinquish their self-righteousness and accept the glorious provisions of the new covenant? Would they cease their vain efforts to establish their own righteousness and accept the righteousness of God? The offer was theirs. History records that they turned it down and became even more bigoted (see pp. 32, 33).

There is great danger that in our present age of enlightenment men will choose to live under the conditions of the old covenant. They realize that obedience is a necessary condition to salvation, but their endeavors spring from unsanctified hearts. They attempt the impossible. They become discouraged. They cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24). If in the moment of despair they find Jesus, then that which "the law could not do," He enables them to do (Rom. 8:3). With the indwelling Christ the "requirements [alternative translation] of the law" are fulfilled in them (Rom. 8:4).

27. *Cause you to walk.* See on ch. 11:20.

28. *Ye shall be my people.* This promise was conditional on the realization of the spiritual purity described above. Had the necessary revival been effected, their residence in the land would have been permanent. Jerusalem would have stood forever. From her would have gone out the dove of peace to bring the whole world under the influence of the true religion (see DA 577; GC 19). The words, “Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (see Eze. 11:20; cf. Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 30:22), are descriptive of the covenant relationship in which Jehovah stood toward Israel. This covenant included more than national independence and prosperity. It comprehended the whole plan to make Israel the spiritual nucleus of a worldwide missionary program. The rejection of the covenant (see Matt. 21:43) resulted in the removal of this spiritual privilege. It did not necessarily imply that the Jews would never establish an independent political state; the present state of Israel is in no wise a fulfillment of these ancient forecasts. Nor would any mass return of the Jews to Palestine be a fulfillment of these predictions. Jesus positively stated (see Matt. 21:43) that the covenant promise now has been given to another “nation,” namely, the Christian church. Through this body God is now working to evangelize the world (see Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6; Gal. 3:29; see pp. 33–36).

29. *From all your uncleannesses.* Divine grace is promised to prevent a lapsing back into the old ways. Such an experience calls for a daily renewal of consecration, a daily receiving of fresh supplies of spiritual power, and the maintenance of a constant vigilance against the enemy.

30. *Multiply the fruit.* These temporal blessings might have been Israel’s at the time of the entry into Canaan (Deut. 28:3–6). Sin brought drought and famine. These promises do not apply as directly or as literally to Christians today. Formerly God was working with a nation, geographically isolated. The prosperity of the nation was to be an object lesson to other nations. Today Christians are scattered in all lands, and share in the calamities that strike their respective countries. However, God does not forget His people in calamity. He frequently intervenes to bring protection and blessing.

31. *Shall loathe yourselves.* See on ch. 20:43. When the gates of heaven swing open to admit the people who have kept the truth, there will again be a feeling of great unworthiness. As the redeemed behold the glories that surpass human imagination, they cast their crowns at the feet of their Redeemer and ascribe all honor to Him (see EW 289).

32. *Not for your sakes.* For comment see on v. 22.

35. *Like the garden of Eden.* Palestine would be so blessed as to resemble in excellence and prosperity the Garden of Eden. Again this promise was conditional upon the faithfulness and obedience of the people. Israel’s defection prevented its fulfillment. However, no failure of man can frustrate the eternal purpose of God. “To spiritual Israel have been restored the privileges accorded the people of God at the time of their deliverance from Babylon” (PK 714). The redeemed are soon to inhabit “a new earth” (Rev. 21:1) which will be like the Garden of Eden in beauty and productiveness.

36. *The heathen that are left.* Ezekiel is describing conditions as they might have been. It was God’s plan that through the restoration of Israel a demonstration of the goodness and benevolence of the true God would be given to the world, so that all nations might be attracted to and be granted the opportunity of becoming a part of the new spiritual economy. Unfortunately, the Jews who returned after the Exile created an

entirely opposite impression. Other nations, instead of being attracted, were led to blaspheme the God whom these recalcitrant people claimed to worship (see pp. 31, 32).

Today the picture is somewhat altered. Instead of having an isolated nation on exhibition to demonstrate the advantages of His plan, God is calling upon individual Christians to make their lives so attractive that others will be led to seek the God whom these Christians worship.

37. *Be enquired of.* Earlier, God had refused to listen (see chs. 14:3, 4; 20:3). But the time would come when “the house of Israel,” chastened in body and in spirit, would realize their dependence upon God and would seek Him for the counsel and guidance without which it would be impossible for them as a nation to realize the high destiny that awaited them (see pp. 26–30).

38. *The flock of Jerusalem.* The teeming population prophesied for Palestine is compared with the large flocks of sacrificial animals assembled at Jerusalem at the great annual feasts.

They shall know. For comment on this frequently recurring refrain of the book of Ezekiel see on ch. 6:7. Note that it occurs four times in ch. 36 (vs. 11, 23, 36, 38).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

25 COL 158

25, 26 MYP 71

26 CT 452; DA 407; Ev 290; FE 264; ML 24, 261; MM 40; SC 53; TM 328, 369; 7T 189; 9T 15226, 27 DA 174; MB 20

31 COL 161

CHAPTER 37

1 *By the resurrection of dry bones, 11 the dead hope of Israel is revived. 15 By the uniting of two sticks, 18 is shewed the incorporation of Israel into Judah. 20 The promises of Christ's kingdom.*

1. *The hand of the Lord.* Chapter 37 consists of two parts: the vision of the dry bones, and (vs. 15–28) a symbolical act forecasting the future union of Israel and Judah. The vision of the dry bones was designed to illustrate how Israel, scattered and seemingly hopeless, would be revived and restored.

The question may be raised, To what degree is this prophecy concerned with the future resurrection? Many hold that such an application was not at all in the prophet's mind and that the symbol is fully explained by a restoration of the national life of the people. The most natural way to apply the prophecy is in terms of God's plan for the revival of the Jewish state. This would ultimately be followed by a literal resurrection, when the patriarchs, together with all the holy men of God, would be raised to share in the new kingdom. It is not necessary to exclude this event entirely from the symbolism. The whole symbolism is intended to describe how events would have evolved in that period and subsequently if the Jews had cooperated with God for the working out of His design for them. But unbelief and disobedience thwarted the divine purpose. NT writers must be consulted as to how these events, which should have met a literal fulfillment in the postexilic period, will be achieved in the Christian Era with spiritual Israel (see pp. 35, 36).

Valley. Heb. *biq'ah*, the word translated “plain” in ch. 3:22. Perhaps the same place is designated.

2. *Very dry.* Indicating that it had been a long time since life had been in them, and possibly emphasizing the hopelessness of revival.

3. *Can these bones live?* The question seems to heighten the idea of improbability, if not impossibility, at least from a human point of view.

Thou knowest. Compare Rev. 7:14.

4. *Hear the word.* Figuratively the dry bones are represented as capable of sensation.

5. *Breath.* Heb. *ruach*, translated “wind” in v. 9 and “spirit” in v. 14. *Ruach* is symbolic of the divine energy that animates living beings. When God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7) God did not merely supply the oxygen that filled Adam’s lungs, but imparted life, so that which had been inanimate tissue became living tissue.

6. *Put breath in you.* The process of revivification corresponds to the two steps by which man was originally created (Gen. 2:7).

9. *Upon these slain.* The bones were strewn over the valley as of the slain after a battle.

11. *The whole house of Israel.* The Holy Spirit now interprets the symbolic vision. The primary intention was doubtless to depict the restoration of the nation, or the “house of Israel,” whose condition at the time was appropriately symbolized by these dry bones.

Cut off for our parts. This phrase is obscure in the English. The Hebrew may be interpreted as meaning, “as for us, we are cut off.” Hence the RSV translation, “we are clean cut off.”

12. *Open your graves.* In v. 2 the bones were represented as “in the open valley.” Here they are spoken of as being in their graves. The new figure may point to the larger promise of awakening those who have gone to their graves in the hope of the kingdom of God. There is no apparent reason why this glorious prospect should be withheld from the pioushearted in Israel. Such an event was to mark the climactic consummation of the whole restoration. On the other hand, this prophecy should not be taken as primarily a forecast of the final resurrection at the end of the Christian Era. God’s original plan for a restoration, culminating in a resurrection, was not realized by literal Israel. That which God would have accomplished with the nation of Israel will now be worked out through the Christian church. With circumstances thus altered, certain features of the prophecy are changed. NT writers have the function of informing us how these prophecies, which should have met an earlier fulfillment, will ultimately meet their application (see pp. 35–38). These writers clearly describe the time and the circumstances of the final resurrection (John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:1–5; etc.).

16. *One stick.* The prophecy of vs. 15–28 is undated, but it was probably given shortly after the vision of vs. 1–14. The two are closely related. The divided nations of Israel were to be reunited and placed under the beneficent rule of David.

21. *Will gather them.* The restoration of Israel from captivity among the heathen was the first step in the fulfillment of the divine promises. This remnant was to consist of those who had profited from the discipline of the Exile and had become spiritually pure. Since the prerequisite revival was never attained, either before or after the return under Zerubbabel, the fulfillment of these promises was prevented. God did for Israel all that their obdurate disobedience would allow Him to do, but they remained rebellious. Therefore, eventually, He had to reject them utterly. The unfolding of the divine promise

here and in the following verses applies to the picture as it would have been if God's purposes had been carried out (see p. 34).

22. *One king shall be king.* In v. 24 he is described as being "David my servant." However, since these plans could not be worked out in their original intent, the Messiah is presented in the NT as the one to sit upon the throne of David (Luke 1:32).

25. *For ever.* Strong emphasis is given to the permanence of the new state. Here the occupancy of the land and the kingship of David is said to be forever. According to vs. 26–28 the sanctuary is to be "in the midst of them for evermore" and the covenant of peace is to be "an everlasting covenant." With these expressions should be compared the following statements concerning God's intent: "Had Israel remained true to God, this glorious building [Solomon's Temple] would have stood forever, a perpetual sign of God's especial favor to His chosen people" (PK 46). "Had Israel as a nation preserved her allegiance to Heaven, Jerusalem would have stood forever, the elect of God" (GC 19). Ezekiel describes conditions as they might have been (see Luke 19:42).

26. *Multiply them.* This would have resulted from the natural increase of the population and from the influx owing to diligent missionary activities.

CHAPTER 38

1 *The army, 8 and malice of Gog. 14 God's judgment against him.*

1. *The word of the Lord.* Chapters 38; 39 constitute a continuous prophecy. The whole passage has been the subject of much speculation. Many interpretations have from time to time been proposed. To evaluate these adequately it is necessary to be familiar with the basic purposes, methods, and scope of prophecy.

The problem is to find a means of adequately differentiating between that which has a local, immediate application and that which has an application more remote, perhaps in the Christian age, or at the end of time. Bible students who apply certain OT prophecies to the Christian age note frequently that these prophecies have interspersed among them references of obviously local and immediate application. They sought to explain this apparent blending of the immediate with the future on the premise that the prophet, while giving a message to the people of his day, took occasional prophetic excursions and projected his prophecies into the distant future. Although this premise appears to offer a partial solution to the problem, it provides no criteria for adequate differentiation between that which is immediate and that which is distantly future.

The answer to this problem of differentiation lies in the formulation of a principle, the method of which is exhibited in the Bible itself and is further substantiated in the Spirit of prophecy. It will be seen that this principle provides a safe method of discriminating between that which the Holy Spirit, in inspiration, intended to be of immediate import and that which has also a more distant application. The principle may be stated as follows:

Prophecies respecting a future glory of Israel and Jerusalem were primarily conditional on obedience (see Jer. 18:7–10; PK 704). They would have met a literal fulfillment in the centuries following had Israel fully accepted God's purposes concerning them. The failure of Israel made impossible the fulfillment of these prophecies in their prophecies in their original intent. However, this does not necessarily imply that these prophecies have no further significance. Paul supplies the answer in these words, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Hence, these promises have a degree of

application to spiritual Israel. But to what extent? This must be left to inspiration to determine. Thus we have, in the NT and in the writings of the Spirit of prophecy, numerous quotations from the OT writers showing how these ancient forecasts, which should have met glorious fulfillment in the literal seed, will ultimately be accomplished in the spiritual seed.

It is immediately apparent, however, that not all the details of the original prophecy could meet their fulfillment precisely, with conditions and environment now so different. In fact, it is a safe rule of exegesis to make only such applications as subsequent revelation specifies, as well as to note the limitations it imposes. What exceeds this boundary is at best but speculation, and thus should never be the basis for a dogma or the premise on which a whole structure of theological reasoning is reared.

The distinctly local mold in which these ancient prophecies were cast is explained on the basis that God originally intended these predictions to be fulfilled in the pattern indicated. Furthermore, what have been designated as excursions into the distant future largely detached from the general discussion, are seen also to be presented in the framework of God's earlier purposes. Now, however, with these earlier purposes unrealized, later inspired writers disclose the unfolding of these forecasts in the setting of the Christian church (see pp. 25–38).

In the light of this principle it may be observed that chs. 38; 39 of Ezekiel would have met a literal fulfillment after the Jews returned from exile if they had accepted the conditions offered by the prophets. Because they persistently refused, the condition of prosperity here pictured was never realized. Consequently the combination of heathen nations could not come down upon a people dwelling in the prosperity indicated.

Will the prophecy have an application in the future? On the basis of the principle here enunciated, such an application can be established with certainty only by a subsequent revelation. There is only one direct NT reference to the imagery of this prophecy, that of Rev. 20:8. Here John tells us how this prophecy, which, under certain conditions, would have been literally fulfilled in an earlier day, will have a degree of fulfillment in the final struggle against God on the part of the vast hosts of the wicked, called "Gog and Magog." The Spirit of prophecy gives no direct exposition of this chapter. Indirectly, of course, there may be seen a parallel between this struggle and the final struggle against the Israel of God when "the nations shall unite in making void God's law" (5T 524) and the wicked fully unite "with Satan in his warfare against God" (GC 656). "As he [Satan] influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God" (9T 231; cf. TM 465). This age-long controversy will ultimately be terminated by the destruction of Satan and his hosts (termed Gog and Magog, Rev. 20:8) at the end of the millennium. But by this time the conflict has reached worldwide proportions, and can no longer be confined to as narrow a sphere as is indicated in Eze. 38; 39, when it consisted of a military struggle against a politically restored Jewish state (see 6T 18, 19, 395).

Any exposition that goes beyond the bounds of the NT and the Spirit of prophecy interpretation is without a "Thus saith the Lord." It must not be assumed, of course, that there can be no further knowledge without additional revelation. But this much is certain, that apart from the specific confirmation of inspiration there exists a high probability of error in any such exposition, especially with regard to unfulfilled prophecy, as is evident from the whole history of prophetic interpretation.

2. Gog. This is the name chosen by Ezekiel to designate the leader of the heathen hosts who would attack the restored Jewish state after the return of the exiles (see vs. 14–16). Efforts to identify him with any historical character have so far proved fruitless. The root from which the name is derived is unknown. The word occurs 13 times in the Scriptures, but none of the references throws any light on its meaning. Gog appears in 1 Chron. 5:4 as the name of one of the sons of Joel of the tribe of Reuben. In Rev. 20:8 it is used in connection with Magog to symbolize the nations of the wicked, whom Satan assembles after the millennium to attack Christ and to seize the New Jerusalem. The 11 occurrences in Ezekiel (chs. 38:2, 3, 14, 16, 18; 39:1, 11, 15) describe the leader of a vast coalition of heathen nations. Gog is also the reading of the Samaritan and the LXX for Agag in Num. 24:7. A compound form, Hamon-gog, the “multitude of Gog,” is used in Eze. 39:11, 15, which name is applied to the valley in which the multitudes of Gog would be buried. All these Bible references shed no light on the identity of Gog, and the only indication as to his origin is in ch. 38:15, where the statement is made, “Thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts.”

In secular sources, contemporary with Ezekiel or earlier, no character by the name of Gog is found. Several names resembling it have been found. One of them is that of Gyges, king of Lydia (c. 600 B.C., see Vol. II, p. 66; see on 1 Chron. 1:5). Because of the slight similarity between Gyges and Gog, some commentators have attempted to equate the two. An examination of the historical evidence shows that Gyges was not a king of outstanding military genius. In the records left by Ashurbanipal, Gyges is called Guggu. The story is told of how Guggu sent ambassadors to Ashurbanipal for aid against the Cimmerians. Ashurbanipal states that with the help of the Assyrian gods, Ashur and Ishtar, Guggu was able to overcome his enemies. However, later, in a war between Assyria and Egypt, the treacherous Guggu joined with Egypt. Guggu was later rewarded for his perfidy when the Cimmerians overran his country and killed him. Such is the story of Guggu. But there is no evidence whatsoever to prove that Gog is the Hebrew form of Guggu. Similarity of sound seems to form the only connection, and such evidence is largely valueless without further confirmatory proof.

Another suggestion connects Gog with the barbarian country of *Gagaia*, which is mentioned in the Tell el-Amarna Tablets (see Vol. I, p. 169; cf. pp. 105, 106). However, *Gagaia* is a country and not a person, as the Gog of Ezekiel is represented to be.

Actually it is not necessary to find a Gog in the historical records. Gog is most probably an ideal name by which Ezekiel describes the leader of the heathen hordes who make a final onslaught upon Israel after their restoration, and at a time when they are enjoying the prosperity promised by God upon condition of their obedience.

The land of Magog. Or, “of the land of Magog.” The “Magog” of Ezekiel was the homeland of Gog, and like “Gog” its meaning is obscure. The title was probably formed by Ezekiel himself, by prefixing *ma* to the name *gog*. “Magog” occurs five times in the Scriptures. It is used twice in Ezekiel (here and in ch. 39:6), as the land of Gog; once in Rev. 20:8, of the nations of the wicked; and in Gen. 10:2 and 1 Chron. 1:5, of one of the sons of Japheth. Some, having identified Gog as Gyges, king of Lydia, suggest that Magog must necessarily be Lydia. There is no historical proof of this, however. The barbaric tribe called *Gagaia*, usually understood to refer to Magog, is mentioned in a letter of a Babylonian king (see on Gen. 10:2).

These two names, Gog and Magog, have occasioned much speculation. Early Jewish tradition identified Magog with the Scythians (Josephus *Antiquities* i. 6. 1). The same is suggested by Gesenius (see his Hebrew lexicon).

However, this identification of Magog with the Scythians still rests only on conjecture. Like Gog, the name is probably idealistic, too close identity probably having been purposely avoided, as is often the case in predictive prophecy, lest such identity in prediction defeat its fulfillment.

Other fanciful interpretations from time to time have identified Magog with various nations or with individuals. A large library of legends concerning Gog and Magog could be collected. In many of them the story concerns a wall to keep out Gog and Magog. This wall has been situated in many countries, from Greece to China, depending on the nationality of the legend. The breaking of the wall paved the way for the destructive forces of Gog and Magog to do their work. In some of the legends these events were connected with the appearance of the Antichrist, at which time Gog and Magog (the wild peoples north of the Caucasus Mts.), formerly shut behind gates by Alexander the Great, would be let loose (see L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. I, pp. 555, 583, 584, 586, 662).

The chief prince of. Heb. *nešī' ro'sh*. *Nešī'* means prince. *Ro'sh* may mean "chief," as here. However the LXX renders it as a proper name *Rōs*, as does also the RV by its translation "Rosh." The RSV follows the KJV. Whatever translation is adopted, the general teaching of the prophecy remains the same. If *ro'sh* is taken to represent a nation, we still have the problem of identifying that nation.

However, the propriety of translating the Heb. *ro'sh* as a proper name "Rosh" is questionable. The word is very common in the Hebrew, occurring more than 600 times in the OT. Its basic meaning is "head," and in the KJV is nowhere translated as a proper name except in Gen. 46:21, where it is the name given a son of Benjamin. Of course, the possibility exists that a word occurring more than 600 times with the basic idea of "head" could actually in one or two instances become a proper name. Perhaps the strongest evidence claimed in support of the translation "Rosh" is the testimony of the LXX. The LXX was translated in the 3d and 2d centuries B.C., and for some reason its translators adopted the reading *Rōs*. Whether in their day they knew of a land called *Rōs*, we cannot tell.

There is a syntactical consideration that tends to favor a proper name here. If the word *ro'sh* is used as an adjective, it would normally be expected to have an article, inasmuch as it would modify "*nešī'*," which in the Hebrew is definite by reason of being in the construct state with a proper noun, in this case, "Meshech." Examples of such constructions, where the adjective modifying the noun in the construct state is definite by the affixing of the article, are Jer. 13:9, "the great pride of Jerusalem"; Ezra 7:9, "the good hand of his God." The adjective stands in Eze. 38:2 without the article, providing a pretext for translating it as a proper name, since proper names do not take the article. But the evidence is by no means conclusive. At times such an adjective is itself placed in the construct state, and is hence without the article in the Hebrew (see, for example, 2 Sam. 23:1; 2 Chron. 36:10). A notable exception to the foregoing rule is also found in 1 Chron.

27:5, where the expression *hakkohen ro'sh*, “chief priest,” occurs. There “priest” has the article and the adjective “chief” is without the article. However, this is considered by editors of the Hebrew text to be an error, the article naturally belonging to the adjective.

A study of the secular sources in search of a country by the name of “Rosh” yields very little. Several names with a sound similar to “Rosh” appear in Assyrian inscriptions, but there is no certainty that any of them is identical with “Rosh.”

From the 10th century until the present day, attempts have been made by various exegetes to identify “Rosh” as “Russia.” According to Gesenius, the Byzantine writers of the 10th century identified “Rosh” under the name of *hoi Rhōs*, a people inhabiting the northern parts of Taurus, who, he claims, were “undoubtedly the Russians” (see his Hebrew lexicon). He also mentions an Arabian writer of the same period, Ibn Fossilan, who speaks of these people as dwelling upon the river *Rha* (Volga).

However, historical evidence shows that the term “Russia” did not come from “Rosh.” Among the Slavs who lived in what is now Russia were groups of Vikings called Varangians, who migrated from eastern Sweden. Although there are different views concerning the role of the Varangians, it is the prevailing scholarly opinion that these non-Slavic warrior-traders and military leaders gave the name “Rus” (whence “Russia”) to the territory they ruled. Russian tradition says that Rurik, a Varangian, took the title of Prince of Novgorod (the leading city of northern Russia at that time) about A.D. 862. His descendants ruled, even through the Mongol domination, until the death of Feodor (Theodore), the last ruler of the Rurik dynasty, in 1598. After a number of years of turmoil, during which several claimants ruled by force, a new czar was elected, Michael Romanoff, whose dynasty continued until the revolution of 1917 (see J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 1912, p. 412; Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia*, 1944; *Encyclopedia Britannica* [1974 ed.] art. “Russia”).

Thus it can be seen that any similarity of sound between “Rosh” and “Russia” is obviously purely coincidental. There seems to be no evidence that the name was applied to that country until about the 10th century. A.D.

Meshech. The name appears nine times in the Scriptures. In Gen. 10:2 and 1 Chron. 1:5 Meshech is listed as one of the sons of Japheth. In 1 Chron. 1:17 a likely scribal error lists Meshech as one of the sons of Shem, but doubtless “Mash” was intended, in harmony with Gen. 10:23. The other six occurrences refer to Meshech as a nation. Three of these are in Eze. 38, 39; two are in chs. 27:13; 32:26, and the remaining reference is in Ps. 120:5. According to the LXX, “Meshech” should also be read in Isa. 66:19 instead of “that draw the bow.” In all five of its occurrences in Ezekiel (as well as in Gen. 10:2 and 1 Chron. 1:5) it is coupled with Tubal, indicating that the descendants of Japheth are intended. Ezekiel speaks of them as merchants trading with Tyre, in “vessels of brass,” as well as in slaves (ch. 27:13). In Psalms they are described as inclined “for war” (Ps. 120:7).

Historically, Meshech is believed to represent the *Moshians* of the Greek classical writers (see Herodotus iii. 94; vii. 78), the *Mushku* of the Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:2).

Some writers, who find Russia in the sound *ro'sh*, also find Moscow in the sound “Meshech,” or *Mushku*, and believe that the city may have been founded by descendants

of the *Mushku*. However, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1974 edition, Moscow was not established until the 12th century, by George Dolgoruki. No trace of connection between the two names can be found.

Tubal. This name appears eight times in the Scriptures. In Gen. 10:2 and 1 Chron. 1:5 Tubal is listed as one of the sons of Japheth. It occurs in Isa. 66:19, where the LXX has Meshech also (see the foregoing discussion of Meshech). In Ezekiel it is mentioned five times (chs. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2, 3; 39:1), in every case coupled with Meshech. The compound, Tubalcain, appears twice in Gen. 4:22 as the name of the son of Lamech and Zillah.

Historically, Tubal has been identified with the *Tibarenians* (Gr. *Tibarēnoi*) mentioned in Herodotus iii. 94 and with *Tabal* of the Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:2).

Those who hold that *Ro'sh* represents Russia attempt to find in Tubal a reference to Tobolsk. The only basis of equating the two is similarity of sound, and such a basis is scarcely tenable. Tobolsk was not founded until 1587, by the Cossacks, and is an unimportant town.

The fact that there were other countries that occupied a much greater place in history than those mentioned in ch. 38 suggests the thought that exact identity is perhaps not the object of the prophecy. Israel was to know that a vast concourse of people would oppose its future rise to national and spiritual greatness. Precisely who the nations were that would play a leading role in the immense confederacy was more or less beside the point, since virtually all heathen powers in opposition to God were to be included. The selection and enumeration of certain nations was probably no more than a poetic imagery. Similarly, in its application to the present time, inasmuch as all nations will join with Satan in his final struggle against the government of Heaven, no special point is achieved by attempting to identify only a few of the nations.

4. *I will turn thee back.* Not from Palestine, but rather from some purpose impelling Gog, in order to bring him against the Holy Land. This is made clear by the context here and in ch. 39:2. The figure is that of an unruly beast that is bent on taking its own way, but is directed by a superior power. The power is here represented as that of the Lord, since frequently in the Scriptures, God is said to do that which He permits Satan to do (see on 2 Chron. 18:18; Eze. 38:10).

Hooks into thy jaws. Compare ch. 29:4.

All thine army. This vast concourse of peoples comes against Israel fully equipped. Their plans appear to have been carefully laid. Adequate preparations have been made. From a military point of view all the advantages seem to be with the attackers. But with Yahweh against Gog, Israel has nothing to fear.

5. *Persia.* Earlier the prophet had summoned the nations living generally to the north. The second group of nations lived to the east and south. No immediately neighboring nations are mentioned. Only those living in the confines of the known world are summoned to this battle; for possible reasons see on v. 2, concluding paragraph under "Tubal." For a sketch of the history of Persia see Vol. III pp. 51–64.

Ethiopia. Cush (Heb. *Kush*) was the son of Ham (Gen. 10:6). His descendants settled in the south of Egypt in what was later Nubia—now southernmost Egypt and northern Sudan (see on Gen. 10:6).

Libya. Heb. *Put* (see on ch. 27:10).

6. Gomer. Gomer was one of the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5). A second Gomer is mentioned as the wife of Hosea (Hosea 1:3). The only other Biblical occurrence of the name is this remark regarding Gomer and all his bands. None of these references throws much light on who these people were that joined Gog against Israel.

In the secular sources frequent mention is made of the *Gimirri*, or the Cimmerians (see Homer *Odyssey* xi. 14), who are believed to be the same people as Gomer and his bands. They were a barbaric horde of Aryans, who poured down from what is now southern Russia, in the 8th century B.C., over the land of Assyria and its neighbors, causing trouble and bloodshed (see Herodotus i. 15. 16). See further on Gen. 10:2.

Togarmah. Togarmah was the son of Gomer, the grandson of Japheth, and the brother of Ashkenaz and Riphath (Gen. 10:3; 1 Chron. 1:6). Outside of these two references the name occurs only here and in Eze. 27:14, where Togarmah is said to trade in horses and mules in the Tyrian market. Historically, these people have been identified with the *Tilgarimmu* of the Assyrian inscriptions (see on Gen. 10:3).

7. Be thou prepared. The prophet seems ironically to encourage Gog to make all his warlike preparations and muster all his forces together to the end that all the enemies of God may perish together. Gog himself is to be their guard, to control and direct the assault.

8. Visited. Heb. *paqad*, which may here be translated “to muster,” as in Isa. 13:4 (see RSV). In the form here found, *paqad* may also mean “to summon.”

Latter years. Compare Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Dan. 10:14; Micah 4:1; see on Isa. 2:2. How long a period of time is here comprehended is not known. Many years of captivity still lay ahead, and a considerable period would be involved in the reestablishment of the Jewish state, to bring it into the condition here described.

Many people. Better, “many peoples,” or “many nations.”

Always. Heb. *tamid*, “continually” (see on Dan. 8:11). The mountains of Israel had not perpetually been waste, but during the Captivity had been so constantly. Even after the return from bondage the rehabilitation would be a gradual process, and the full restoration would not come until after the destruction of the enemies of the new state.

9. Like a storm. Compare Prov. 1:27; Isa. 21:1; 28:2; Eze. 13:11.

Like a cloud. Some, in applying this prophecy to events of the now immediate future, have applied this symbolism to the modern air forces. This is purely conjectural. Whether Satan will employ air power in his final, postmillennial campaign (Rev. 20:9; see on Eze. 38:1) cannot be known.

10. Think an evil thought. Or, “devise an evil scheme” (RSV). Verses 4–16 present God as the one bringing Gog upon the land of Israel. Here it is observed that God will do this, in the sense that He will permit Gog to carry out devices of his evil heart.

11. Unwalled villages. Compare Zech. 2:4, 5. This would lead Gog to expect an easy victory.

12. *The midst of the land.* Literally, “the navel [height] of the earth.” The figure is used elsewhere only in Judges 9:37, but there applied presumably to a hill near Shechem, probably from its central location with respect to the Jordan and the Mediterranean. Here Palestine is represented as in the center of the earth, perhaps in the same way as Jerusalem was set “in the midst of the nations and countries” (Eze. 5:5).

13. *Sheba.* The prophet now adds three more names to his list of nations. These three are not mentioned as joining with the advancing hosts, but as asking about the spoil that may be taken. Perhaps they hope that some of it would be traded into their hands. For the identification of Sheba see on ch. 27:22.

Dedan. See on ch. 25:13.

Tarshish. Believed to be the Phoenician colony of *Tartessus* in Spain. Attempts have been made to identify it with countries around Palestine, but from the description in the Scriptures it was at some distance across the sea. The minerals that were secured from Tarshish are still produced in Spain. *Tartessus* seems to fit all the details we have concerning it (see on Gen. 10:4). The “merchants of Tarshish” are possibly the Phoenicians.

16. *I shall be sanctified.* Verses 14–16 largely repeat what has already been said concerning the peaceful security of Israel, and of God’s permitting the mighty confederacy of Gog to come against His people. In the destruction of Gog the character of God will stand fully vindicated. So again, in the destruction of Satan and of the vast multitude of the wicked at the end of the millennium, God’s wisdom, justice, and goodness will stand fully vindicated. From the lips of all creatures, both loyal and rebellious, will be heard these words, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:3; cf. GC 668–671).

17. *Of whom I have spoken.* An earlier prophecy mentioning the name Gog is not now extant, nor need we be concerned that any such may have been lost. Viewed in its larger aspects, the battle here described is but the culmination of the agelong struggle between the powers of evil and the people of God. Concerning this there is frequent mention in earlier prophecies. The earliest intimation comes from the Garden of Eden in the curse pronounced upon the serpent. God predicted that there would be a constant warfare between the seed of the woman, the church, and Satan. Ultimate triumph over evil was forecast in the clause, “it [the seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head” (Gen. 3:15). Other references to the controversy and the eventual triumph of right are found in the psalms and later prophetic books (see Ps. 2; 110; Isa. 26:20, 21; etc.).

Naturally, any success on the part of the people of God would meet with most violent opposition from the great adversary. The narrative of Gog in this chapter is a delineation of the type of resistance that would have been encountered in the post-exilic period by a regenerated people now at last fulfilling their divine mission. Inasmuch as the prophecy was conditional and the conditions were never met, the predictions were not fulfilled in literal Israel. Nor can all the details be projected into the future so as to have a fulfillment then. Only those features reiterated later by sacred writers can be taken positively to have future application (see pp. 36–38; see on v. 1).

18. *In my face.* Literally, “in my nostrils,” a figure reflecting human anger (see Ps. 18:8). Such figures that ascribe human attributes to God are called anthropomorphisms. God describes His acts in terms with which men are familiar. In reality, God is vastly

above human reason. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8).

19. Great shaking. Here is a feature to which NT writers call attention. They tell of fearful convulsions of nature that will precede the coming of the Son of man. Jesus mentions "the sea and the waves roaring" and "men's hearts failing them for fear," not so much because of some military threat to their security, but because all nature seems to be out of its course (Luke 21:25, 26; GC 636). John the revelator gives an even more graphic description of the tremendous upheavals in the natural world (Rev. 16:18–20). Men have always depended upon nature. Not once during the long history of the earth, except in connection with the events recorded in Joshua 10:12, 13 and 2 Kings 20:8–11, has the sun failed to move in its normal cycle. All natural law has operated with regulated consistency. Men have relied upon the permanence of these operations, forgetting Him by whom "all things consist" (Col. 1:17). They have chosen in His place the idol of science and, in reality, "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). The "great shaking" in the natural world will come to them as a fearful awakening to the fact that the god whom they have chosen, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), has no power over the elements. Yet he claimed a position and power equal to that of the Son of God (see on Eze. 28:13) and asserted that, if given an opportunity, he would exercise a more equitable control over the world than Christ. He has been given an opportunity for such a demonstration. Now, in the midst of a reeling earth, all men see the falseness and arrogance of his claims and discover too late that probation's hour has closed forever.

21. Every man's sword. This also finds a parallel during the time of the fearful disillusionment, when the multitudes discover they have been deluded by their religious leaders, and in their rage turn against them. "The swords which were to slay God's people, are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed" (GC 656).

According to the OT record there were numerous occasions upon which God brought deliverance to His people by setting their enemies to fighting one another (see Judges 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:20; 2 Chron. 20:22–24).

22. Great hailstones. The parallel to this is the seventh plague, when hail of the weight of about a talent will add to the destruction already wrought (Rev. 16:21). The "fire" may find its counterpart in the "lightnings" of Rev. 16:18. Of these the application is made, "Fierce lightnings leap from the heavens, enveloping the earth in a sheet of flame" (GC 638).

23. They shall know. As Gog was to be utterly discomfited and men were to acknowledge the superiority of the God of heaven, so, as the controversy nears its climax, the carefully laid schemes of the great deceiver will be totally unmasked, and Satan will be unveiled in the weakness and falsity of his claims. Demons and men will be led to acknowledge that there is but One who is supreme, and that all His dealings in the great controversy have been conducted with respect to the eternal good of His people and the universe at large (see GC 671).

For further comment on this frequently recurring refrain of the book of Ezekiel see on ch. 6:7. It occurs twice here ch. (38:16, 23) and four times in ch. 39 (vs. 6, 7, 22, 28).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 *God's judgment upon Gog.* 8 *Israel's victory.* 11 *Gog's burial in Hamon-gog.* 17 *The feast of the fowls.* 23 *Israel, having been plagued for their sins, shall be gathered again with eternal favour.*

1. Prophecy against Gog. This chapter continues the subject of the preceding one, repeating in part what has already been said concerning Gog, but adding further details as to the extensive spoils (vs. 9, 10), the system of burial (vs. 11–16), and the extent of the carnage (vs. 17–20). Verses 21–29 recapitulate God's gracious promises concerning the restoration.

Gog. See on ch. 38:2.

2. Leave but the sixth part. Heb. *shasha'*, a word occurring only here, and thought to mean "to lead [like a child]." The translation of the KJV is based upon the idea that the root of *shasha'* is *shesh*, "six." This is questionable. The Targums read *nasha'*, which means "to lead into error," "to deceive," "to impose upon anyone." The LXX has *kathodēgēsō*, "I will lead [or bring] thee down." These different readings correspond to the combination of ideas in ch. 38:4, 16.

3. Smite thy bow. The invaders are represented as bowmen.

4. Birds ... beasts. Vultures and jackals were ever ready to feast upon the corpses of the slain in battle (see 1 Sam. 17:46; Eze. 33:27).

6. A fire on Magog. Magog is the country of Gog (see on ch. 38:2). The judgment strikes there also and extends to the coastlands and isles of the sea.

7. The heathen shall know. God's name would be vindicated in these judgments (see on ch. 38:16).

9. Burn them with fire seven years. This section of the prophecy will clearly not have a literal fulfillment in connection with the second coming of Christ and the millennium. According to the principle outlined in comments on ch. 38:1, history would have taken a vastly different course if Israel had permitted God to work out His designs with respect to them. In the natural course of events the restored and prosperous nation would become the target of attack from envious heathen nations that refused to accept Israel's message of the true God. In such a war as here described, God would protect His people by giving them overwhelming victory. This prophetic description of the great conflict would doubtless have been as literally fulfilled as the promises of a national restoration and world mission for the returned exiles of Israel. The question may be asked, Why, then, will not these things come to pass now that there is once more a national state of Israel in Palestine in modern times? The answer is that in the meantime the Jews, upon their rejection of Jesus, were rejected of God as a nation, and the promises have for two thousand years belonged to the Christian church, to be fulfilled in a spiritual sense for spiritual Israel (see pp. 35, 36).

11. A place there of graves. Gog, who had hoped to gain complete mastery over the land of Israel, would receive from the Lord but a place for burial there.

Passengers. Heb. *'oberim*, "those that pass through or over," or "travelers." The valley cannot be definitely located. It is said to be east of the sea, doubtless meaning the Dead Sea. The precise location is not important to the interpretation of the passage.

Noses of the passengers. There is no word for "noses" in the Hebrew. The sentence should read, "It will stop the travelers." The meaning may be that the travelers would be arrested as they pass by this notorious spot, and would be compelled to consider the

signal judgment inflicted on the enemies of the people of God. Or the meaning may be that the valley or gorge would have no exit at one end.

The valley of Hamon-gog. Literally, “the valley of the multitude of Gog.”

14. Men of continual employment. Literally, “men of continuance,” men appointed to this business to stay by the task until it was completed. The work was to be systematically performed.

With the passengers. The Hebrew preposition *’eth*, here translated “with,” may also be the sign of the direct object, making the passage read, “passing through the land to bury the passengers, those that remain.” The LXX and the Syriac have no word corresponding to “passengers,” and simply read, “to bury those that remain.”

15. Set up a sign. The sign would attract the attention of the burial party.

16. Hamonah. Probably derived from the Heb. *hamon*, meaning “multitude.”

17. Every feathered fowl. The representations of vs. 17–20 are not to be considered as picturing events subsequent to those mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter. They simply depict the same events under another figure. The new figure serves to heighten the description of the immense slaughter. Other representations of the destructive judgments of God as a sacrifice are found in Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10. This whole section is strikingly parallel to Rev. 19:17, 18, a passage that indicates when and how this scripture will meet a measure of fulfillment with reference to the Christian Era. By the use of the same imagery John represents the immense slaughter of the wicked at the second coming of Christ, a destruction so complete, however, as to leave none to bury the dead.

21. My glory among the heathen. Ezekiel predicts the course history would have taken if Israel, in captivity, had fully profited by her chastisement (see on ch. 38:1). The overthrow of the multitudes of Gog does not represent the ultimate annihilation of all sinful elements and the introduction of completely renovated new heavens and new earth. It describes, instead, an intermediate step. The stupendousness of the whole scene would evoke such universal marvel that the attention of men everywhere would be directed toward God and His purposes for the inhabitants of this earth. This would become the occasion for great missionary expansion on the part of Israel, which activity would ultimately bring about the kingdom of God.

23. The heathen shall know. No longer would they hold, as formerly, that the sufferings of Israel were the result of God’s lack of power to protect them. They would see, instead, the righteousness and reasonableness of God’s purposes, and as a result they would be attracted to His kingdom, and seek admittance.

29. Poured out my spirit. The revival of Israel would have been accompanied by a great outpouring of the Spirit. This promised power would have enabled them speedily to evangelize the world and prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER 40

¹ *The time, manner, and end of the vision. 6 The description of the east gate, 20 of the north gate, 24 of the south gate, 32 of the east gate, 35 and of the north gate. 39 Eight tables. 44 The chambers. 48 The porch of the house.*

1. Five and twentieth year. Evidently of Jehoiachin’s captivity (see on ch. 1:2), if the scale of years is the same throughout the book. The fact that v. 1 refers to “our” captivity (as does ch. 33:21) indicates that Ezekiel was taken captive along with Jehoiachin.

Beginning of the year. Heb. *ro'sh hashshannah*, "head of the year." Since *ro'sh* is sometimes translated "first," some take this to mean the *first month* of the year, namely Nisan. If so, this date was in April, 573, or April, 572 (depending on whether Ezekiel began the year from the spring or the fall). However, if Ezekiel meant the *beginning* of the year and was reckoning the Captivity by the Jewish civil year, which began with the 7th month (Tishri), this was the Day of Atonement in October, 573 (see p. 572). It is interesting to note that this is the only occurrence in the Bible of the phrase *ro'sh hashshannah*, by which the 1st of Tishri, or New Year's Day, is still called by the Jews today, but this does not prove that it necessarily meant the same in that time. The day mentioned is the 10th, not the 1st.

Fourteenth year. The 25th year of Jehoiachin's captivity can be equated with the 14th after the fall of Jerusalem, to allow the three possible dates mentioned in the preceding paragraph (see Vol. III, pp. 92, 93).

Chapters 40–48 constitute one continuous prophecy of a unique character. They present a vision of a new temple in careful detail, a new and remarkable plan for the division of the land, and a vision of life-giving waters issuing from that magnificent temple.

The prophecy presents several problems of interpretation. Three main lines of exposition have been adopted:

1. The literal view. This holds that Ezekiel furnished the sketch of a new constitution for Israel, to be actually put into operation at some time in the future, either immediately subsequent to the Exile or later. According to this view the erection of a temple, the institution of a worship, and a division of the land would have followed precisely the specifications furnished by Ezekiel.
2. The futurist view. This finds in the temple vision a new constitution for restored and reunited Israel. However, although it concedes that in some small degree it may have been put into force after the Exile, it looks to a yet future golden age as the time when the vision will receive an exact and complete fulfillment.
3. The allegorical view. This denies any literal fulfillment and looks to some symbolical fulfillment in the time immediately subsequent to the Exile, or in the Christian church, or at the end of the age.

As to these three views certain comments may be made.

Against the literal view, it is urged that it is inconceivable that there should be no allusion to the language of Ezekiel in the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, or in the prophecies of Haggai, which all relate to this period. Although these describe the return and settlement in the land, and the rebuilding of the Temple, they make no reference to this prophecy, nor display a desire on the part of the builders to conform to Ezekiel's directions.

Against the futurist view, it is urged that in view of the relations between the old and new dispensations as set forth in Scripture it is impossible to conceive that animal sacrifices could ever again be restored by divine command and find acceptance with God.

Against the allegorical view, it is urged that it supplies an inadequate justification for the many details of the vision and fails to present a sufficiently significant interpretative pattern to warrant the extended attention devoted to the subject.

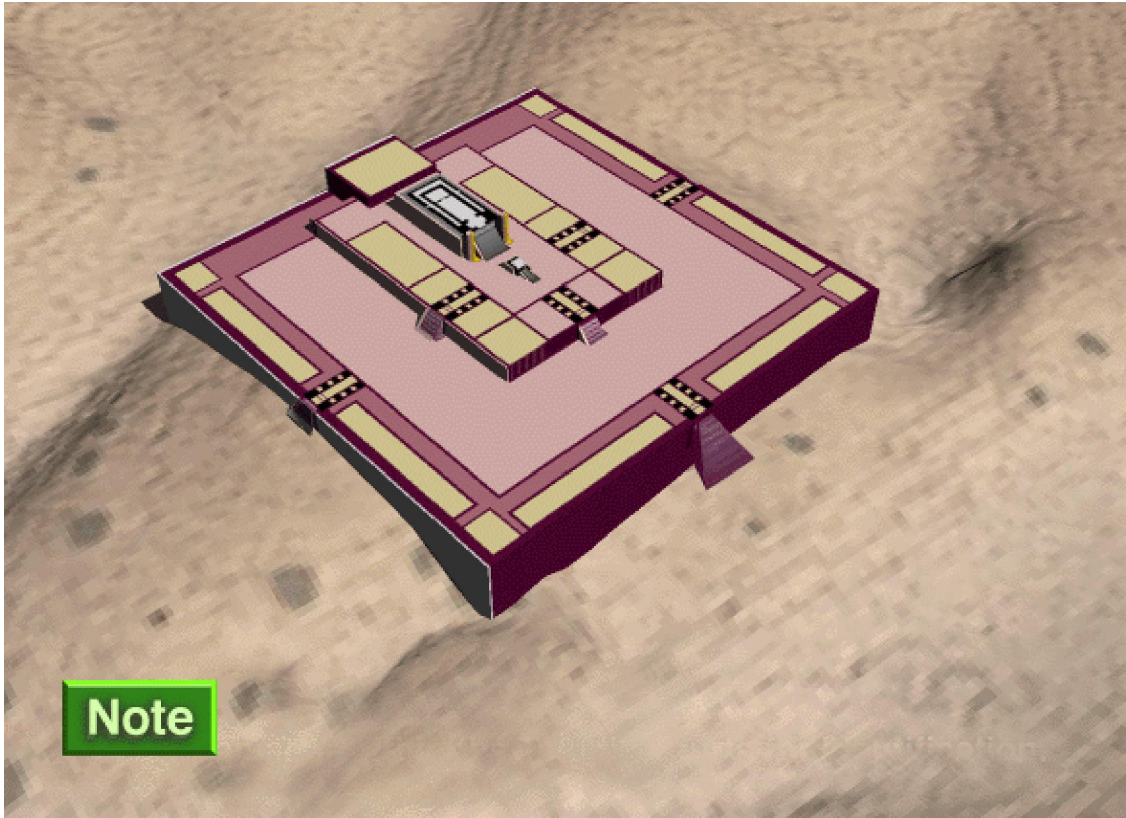
The simplest view is the one that follows the principles outlined in the comments on ch. 38:1. According to these principles the temple vision would have been literally fulfilled if the people had been faithful to their trust, but because they failed, the prophecy could not be fulfilled in its original intent. Only a few, comparatively, returned, and these fell far short of God's purpose for them. Certain features (see ch. 47) will have a degree of fulfillment to the Christian church, as indicated by later inspired writers.

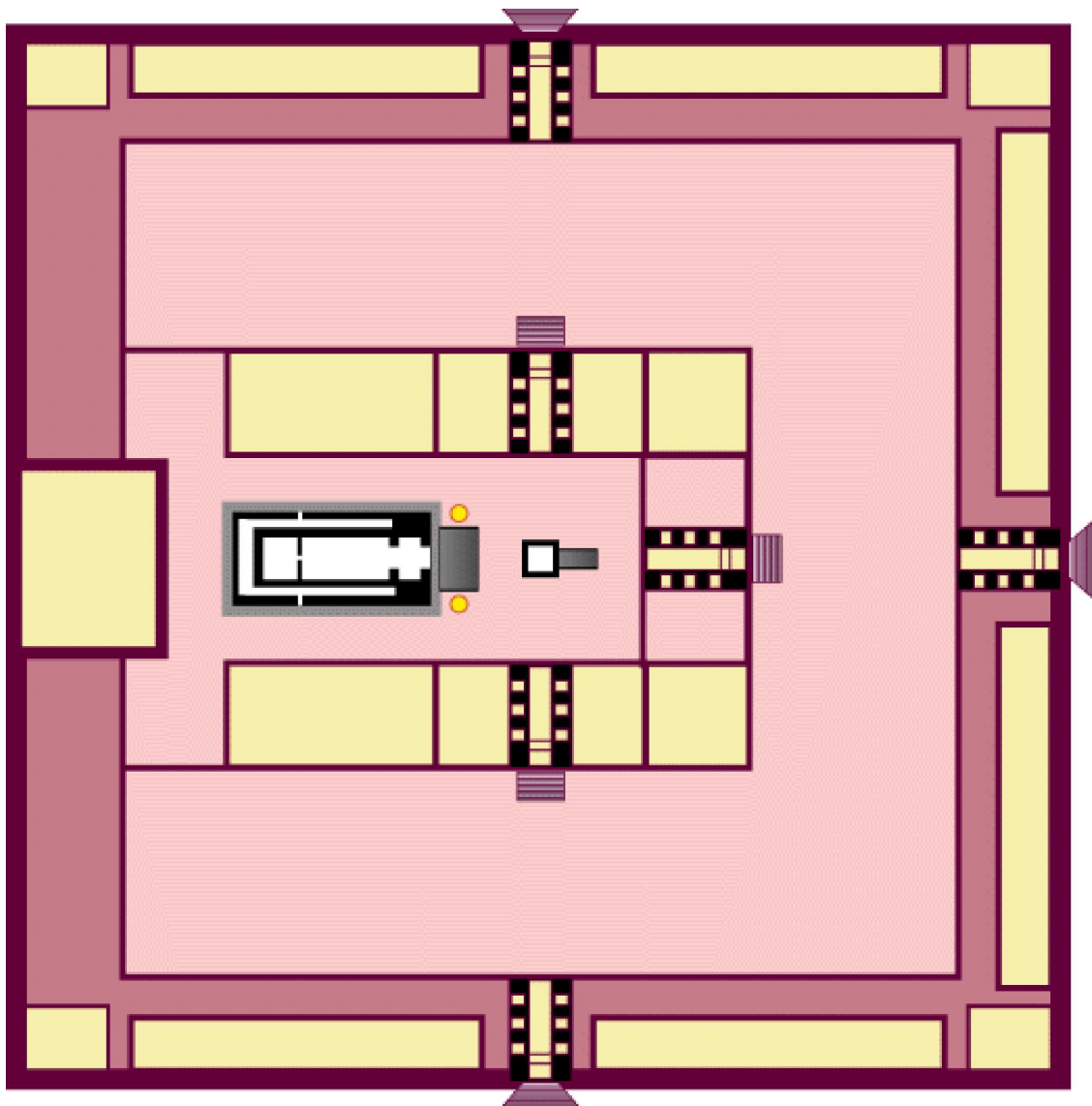
The temple vision is a pictorial prophecy, and the principles outlined in comments on ch. 1:10 must be applied. Ezekiel saw *representations* of the actual and not the actual itself, and the degree of identity remains a problem for further interpretation. Nevertheless, in whatever degree the two vary, a comparison with other prophecies relating to the restoration leads us to the belief that the prophet is here describing a literal state with a literal temple and a literal capital. It is hard to conceive how the Jews, to whom this prophecy was addressed, could have understood it otherwise. The fact that the postexilic Bible writers never referred to this prophecy, and the fact that the Temple builders apparently paid no attention to the plan, may be explained on the ground that the builders were fully aware that the conditions had not yet been met that would permit the fulfillment of these promises. Nor does this series of prophecies give any intimation that the plans were to be executed immediately upon the return of the exiles to their own country. They were doubtless help up as a future goal toward which to strive.

Ezekiel's Temple and Associated Platform

3

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 30:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.





This is not a detailed plan of the temple area, but an attempt to reproduce diagrammatically the measurements of the Bible text. No effort is made to imitate certain structural details often found in excavations, such as the projection of the gatehouses beyond the face of the wall. Some recent scholars, because of the massiveness of ancient walls, have suggested placing vestibules lengthwise rather than crosswise, consequently combining the other dimensions differently. Where the text is not detailed or not clearly understood, this plan shows general locations, or indicates a building in outline.

⁴

If God knew that His temple would never be built, why would He take pains to provide such an itemized pattern of the future state? The answer is: God left no method

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ge 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

untried to induce Israel to accept the high destiny originally planned for them. Up to this point their history had been one of repeated failures. God was now offering them another opportunity to begin again. The past would be forgotten and never again held against them. Israel nationally, and her people personally, were invited to take hold of the glorious provision.

It is reasonable to suppose that, to convince His people of the certainty of the promise, God directed His servant to draw up an exact blueprint of the temple that was to form the center of worship for the new state. God might have left this promise in general terms. He might have merely told them that in the future their temple was to be reconstructed. But such an intimation would have been rather vague. There would be no doubt as to the seriousness of His intentions if every detail of construction and service was carefully portrayed. Nine chapters in all are devoted to the temple and its services, and details concerning the city and the new division of the land.

This is Ezekiel's last important vision (only that concerning Egypt, in ch. 29:17–21, came later), and its magnitude and grandeur are a fitting climax to his prophetic career. The following colorful epitome of that career has been given: "Ezekiel bursts upon the scene like the storm cloud described in his first prophecy, the progress of his visions dazzles us like the revolving chromatic lights in the midst of the moving cloud, until the storm is spent, the cloud melts into space, and so much of the light remains as reveals the splendors of a city, temple, and commonwealth illumined with the unfading glory of an ever-present God" (*Homiletic Commentary*).

2. *Very high mountain.* The prophet was placed upon an eminent spot so that from a vantage point he might examine the details of the vision.

By which. Literally, "upon it."

Frame of a city. The temple and its courts surrounded by walls gave the impression of a walled city (for the size see on v. 5).

3. *A man.* The being is not identified.

Line of flax. This would be used for large measurements (see ch. 47:3).

Measuring reed. See Rev. 11:1; 21:15. This would be used for smaller measurements (see on Eze. 40:5).

4. *Declare all.* The purpose of declaring all these intricate details was to acquaint the children of Israel with God's glorious prospect for them. The delineation of these particulars was evidently intended to be a powerful inducement to the people to meet the necessary conditions. It provided the assurance that God's thoughts toward them were thoughts of peace and not of evil (see Jer. 29:11). The exhibition of a complete blueprint showed them that God was serious regarding these intentions and would do His part if the people did theirs (see pp. 29, 30).

5. *Cubit and an hand breadth.* By reckoning the cubit at 17.5 in. (444.5 mm.) and adding a handbreadth (1/6 cu.), Ezekiel's cubit would be 20.4 in. (518.6 mm.). The measuring reed would then be 10 ft. 21/2 in. long (3.12 m.) (see Vol. I, p. 165).

Breadth of the building. That is, the thickness of the wall surrounding the court. The wall is designated A on the temple plan on p. 716. This drawing is offered as an approximate representation of the building and courts (see note under Key).

The height and breadth of the wall are given here as equal. The length is here not given but appears to have been 500 cu. (about 850 ft. [259 m.], see on ch. 42:16) on each of its four sides. This wall was around the outside of the whole complex structure. It was

not high (about 10 ft. [3 m.]), and people approaching to worship could easily see the temple in all its beauty and glory shining above the walls.

6. Gate which looketh. Verses 6–16 describe the east gate (p. 716, B), or gate building, which was the main gate, since it led directly toward the temple entrance. It is minutely described, inasmuch as the dimensions of the north and south outer gates (p. 716, F, G) are identical.

Stairs. The level of the gateway was higher than the level of the ground surrounding the temple enclosure. It is assumed that like the north and south gateways it had seven steps (see vs. 22, 26; see p. 716, a).

Threshold. The entry of the gate from the outside.

One reed broad. This is the same as the thickness of the enclosing walls (v. 5), that is, 6 cu.; the other dimension of this entry is 10 cu. (v. 11).

7. Little chamber. According to v. 10 there were three of these on each side of the central passageway. The rooms measured about 10 ft. (3.05 m.) square.

Within. Literally, “from the house,” that is, “toward the inside.” This is probably the threshold at the other end of the passageway of the gate structure, leading to the porch (v. 8).

8. Porch. Or, “vestibule” (RSV).

Of the gate. Many manuscripts and the ancient versions omit the passage beginning here and continuing into v. 9, “within, one reed. Then measured he the porch of the gate.” Those who accept the shorter text hold that there was one porch, or vestibule, in this gate. Those who accept the longer text hold that there were two vestibules. Therefore various drawings of the gate building differ in this respect. See p. 716, note under Key, on the uncertainty of architectural details.

9. Eight cubits. About 13 ft. 7 in. (4.3 m.). There is difference of opinion as to whether this was the measurement of the porch from east to west or from north to south.

Posts. Heb. *’elim*, “pillars,” or “jambs” (RSV).

10. Little chambers. See on v. 7.

11. Entry. That is, the outer threshold.

The length of the gate. The dimension measured is uncertain. Some think it is the measurement of that part of the gateway that was roofed over, others that it was the center of the passageway between the side rooms, which was probably unroofed.

12. Space. Perhaps a fence before the guard chambers. It appears that there was some barrier 1 cu. out into the passageway in front of the guard chamber, so the sentinel could step out without hindrance and see up and down the hall.

13. From the roof. This measurement of 25 cu. (42½ ft.; c. 13 m.) is across the gateway from north to south.

14. He made also posts. Some prefer to accept the reading of the LXX, “And the open space of the porch of the gate without, was twenty cubits to the chambers round about the gate.” It is possible that the *’elim* (posts) could have been mistaken for the *’ulam* (porch), although it is difficult to see how 20 could be substituted for 60. According to the reading of the Hebrew, the pillars, or pylons, would be of impressive height.

15. Fifty cubits. About 85½ ft. (26.3 m.). The length of the gate building was twice its breadth (v. 13). One method of reconstruction allowing for one porch or vestibule (see

on v. 8) arrives at the total length as follows: outer threshold, 6 cu.; three 6-cu. guard chambers, 18 cu.; two 5-cu. spaces, 10 cu.; inner threshold, 6 cu.; porch, 8 cu.; jambs, 2 cu., making the total, 50 cu. Other models allowing for two porches arrange these figures differently.

16. Narrow windows. Literally, “closed windows,” probably meaning latticed windows (see on 1 Kings 6:4). The exact position of these windows is not clear.

Palm trees. Similar decorations had been used in the carvings of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:29, 32).

17. Outward court. The temple has two courts, an inner and an outer (p. 716, R and C respectively).

A pavement. The pavement (p. 716, D) surrounded the outer court.

Thirty chambers. The size and position of these chambers (p. 716, E, E, E, E, E, E) is not given. From the point of view of symmetry there were probably ten on the three sides not occupied by the temple buildings. Whether they were constructed in blocks or as a single units is not indicated.

18. Over against the length. This pavement appears to have been as wide as the length of the gate buildings, about 50 cu. (ch. 40:15). From this would be subtracted the thickness of the outer wall of 6 cu. (v. 5), leaving a width for the pavement of about 44 cu.

Lower pavement. Probably so designated to distinguish it from that in the inner court, at a higher elevation (ch. 41:8).

19. An hundred cubits. About 200 ft. The measurement was from the inner entrance of the outer gate building to the outer entrance of the inner gate building (see vs. 23, 27).

20. Toward the north. Verses 20–22 describe the north gate (p. 716, F), which was exactly like the east gate (p. 716, B), already described (vs. 6–16), with the additional information that there were seven steps (p. 716, a) leading up to the gate (v. 22).

23. Gate of the inner court. One standing in the outer court (v. 17) near the north outer gate (p. 716, F) would see the north and east inner gates (I, H), each of which faced its corresponding north or east outer gates, respectively, across a 100 cu. (170 ft.; 51.8 m.) space.

24. Toward the south. Verses 24–27 describe the south gate (p. 716, G), which is identical with the east and north gates already described.

27. Gate in the inner court. The location of the south inner gate (p. 716, J) corresponds to that of the north and east gates.

28. The south gate. The three gates of the inner court (p. 716, H, I, J) are essentially the same as the outer gates. One difference is that the former had a flight of eight steps (p. 716, b) and the latter a flight of seven steps (p. 716, a).

31. Utter. An Old English word meaning “outer.”

32. Measured the gate. Verses 32–37 give a description of the east and north gates of the inner court, which were both exactly like the south gate.

38. Where they washed. The proximity of the present passage to the description of the north gate (vs. 35–37) has led some to the conclusion that the furnishings here described belonged to that gate. Others believe a new section is here introduced and that the east gate is under consideration (see vs. 40, 44; chs. 43:17; 46:1, 2).

39. Tables. Verses 39–41 describe the eight tables upon which the sacrificial victims were slain. For the possible location of these tables see on v. 40 (p. 716, c. c.).

40. The north gate. Some commentators take the word here translated “north” (in KJV and RSV) to mean “northward,” hence on the northward side of the east gate. Opinion varies as to whether these tables were meant to be at the north gate, the east gate, or all three gates.

43. Hooks. Heb. *shephattayim*, the meaning of which here is doubtful. The word is found only here and in Ps. 68, where it is translated “pots” in the KJV and “sheepfolds” in the RSV, but should be rendered “hearthstones” (see on Ps. 68:13), a meaning that is without significance here. The LXX renders *shephattayim* “borders.” “Hooks” is the reading of the Targums.

44. Chambers. The size and exact location of these chambers are unspecified. According to the LXX there were only two chambers, one at the north gate facing south, and the other at the south gate facing north. However, the Hebrew indicates that they were at the side of the north and east gates, and it is not necessary to correct “east” to “south” if these chambers were somewhere in the angels midway between the north and east and the east and south gates.

In the diagram on p. 716, P, P shows possible locations for these chambers consistent with the reading of the Hebrew.

46. Sons of Zadok. On the Zadokite priesthood see on 2 Sam. 8:17.

47. He measured the court. This was the court of the altar (p. 716, R), a square of 100 cu. (about 170 ft.; 51.8 m.), in the center of the inner court.

48. Porch of the house. Verses 48, 49 describe the dimensions of the vestibule of the temple (p. 716, M).

Post. Or, “pillar,” or “jamb” (see on v. 9). The measurement here is of the thickness of the two projections on either side of the entrance.

Three cubits. About 6 ft. 4 in. (1.9 m.). This is possibly the length of the projections on either side of the entrance.

49. Twenty cubits. Some take this measurement to be along the north-south axis of the porch, and suppose that the side chambers (ch. 41:6, 7) extend across the back as well as along the sides of the building. Others restrict the side chambers to the north and south sides and take the 20 cu. measurement of the porch to be along the east-west axis.

Eleven. The LXX reads “twelve.”

The steps. Like the two courts, the house itself was entered by steps. The number is given by the LXX as ten. The house was still higher in elevation than the inner court. See p. 716, d.

Pillars by the posts. Like Solomon’s Temple, this new building was to have a pillar on each side of the steps (p. 716, N, N; see 1 Kings 7:15–22).

CHAPTER 41

The measures, parts, chambers, and ornaments of the temple.

1. The temple. Here designating the holy place (p. 716, L; see 1 Kings 6:17; 7:50).

Posts. That is, the jambs. These were on either side of the entrance and were 6 cu. (10 ft. 2 1/2 in.; 3.1 m.) thick, the same as the walls (v. 5).

2. Sides of the door. This is the measurement from the door to the wall.

Forty cubits. These dimensions are identical with those of the holy place in Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:2, 20), except that Ezekiel employed the long cubit (see on Eze. 40:5).

3. Then went he. The angel goes alone into the holy of holies (see Heb. 9:7).

Post. Or, “jamb,” of the door between the holy place and the most holy place, here only 2 cu. (3 ft. 4.8 in.; 1 m.) thick compared with 6 cu. (10 ft. 21/2 in.; 3.1 m.) at the entrance into the holy place (v. 1).

Door, six cubits. That is, the doorway, the clear space between the posts.

Breadth of the door. According to the LXX the 7-cu. measurement (about 14 ft.) is that of the length of the 2-cu. wall from the doorway to the side walls. Two of these walls plus the 6-cu. doorway would fit the width of the room.

4. Most holy place. A perfect 20-cu. square (p. 716, K), of the same dimensions as in Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:20).

5. Wall of the house. The thickness here given (10 ft. 21/2 in.; 3.1 m.) is the same as that of the wall of the outer court (ch. 40:5). Such a thickness is in accord with the massive proportions of ancient Oriental architecture.

6. The side chambers. These chambers were constructed in much the same way as those in Solomon’s Temple. The breadth of 4 cu. evidently refers to the first-floor chambers.

7. Increased. For details concerning the recessed wall and the increasing dimensions of these chambers see on 1 Kings 6:5, 6. Since there is disagreement as to whether there were 30 rooms on each floor or 30 on all three floors, no partitions are indicated on the diagram (p. 716, f).

8. Height of the house. That is, the raised foundation upon which the house rested. This platform seems to have extended 5 cu. (8 1/2 ft.; 2.6 m.) beyond the outer wall of the chambers (vs. 9, 11), forming a walk outside the chambers (p. 716, e).

Great cubits. Heb. *’aṣṣilah*, meaning “joint.” Its significance here is not clear. It is probably some architectural term.

9. The wall. The outer wall of the side chambers, a cubit less in thickness than the main load-bearing walls of the temple proper.

That which was left. See on v. 8.

10. Between the chambers. That is, the chambers described in ch. 42:1–14. There was an open space (p. 716, S) of 20 cu. (34 ft.; 10.4 m.) extending beyond the platform on the three sides on which the chambers were located.

11. Place that was left. That is, the platform.

12. Building. The purpose of this building (p. 716, O) is not given. It may correspond to the Parbar of the earlier Temple (see 1 Chron. 26:18).

Separate place. Heb. *gizrah*, from a root *gazar*, “to cut,” hence “a space cut off.” This was the space (p. 716, S) at the west end of the temple between the temple and the building (p. 716, O), and probably also the space along the north and south of the temple (see on v. 10).

13. The house. This is the outside measurement of the temple (170 ft.; 51.8 m.) including the porch (see vs. 1–5).

The building. The measurement here is the same, from the back wall of the temple to the outside of the west wall of the building O (p. 716).

14. The breadth. This measurement is the same, including the total width of the temple and the separate place on either side (p. 716, S, S).

15. Length of the building. This is the outside measurement of the building O, including its 5-cu. walls.

The galleries. The meaning of the Hebrew word thus translated is uncertain. The reading “galleries” is conjectural.

With the inner temple. Better, “and the inner temple.” What follows is a description of the temple itself, not of the building behind the temple.

16. Cielled with wood. The Hebrew here is somewhat vague. According to the LXX there is a description here of the paneling of the vestibule (see ch. 40:48), and of the holy and most holy places.

18. Cherubims and palm trees. Compare the artistic carvings in Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:29).

20. Above the door. The paneling apparently covered the entire interior wall (see 1 Kings 6:18).

21. The posts. The Hebrew of this verse is obscure.

22. The altar of wood. This seems to correspond to the altar of incense in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:1–3) and the altar of gold in the former Temple (1 Kings 7:48), although the fact that it is also called “table” has led some to identify it with the table of shewbread.

23. Two doors. The one was at the entrance to the holy place and the other at the entrance to the most holy place.

24. Two turning leaves. The doors were similar to those in Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:31–35).

25. Thick. Heb. ‘*ab*, a word occurring only here and in 1 Kings 7:6. It appears to be an architectural term, the meaning of which is now lost.

26. Narrow windows. Probably better, “latticed windows” (see on 1 Kings 6:4).

CHAPTER 42

1 *The chambers for the priests.* 13 *The use thereof.* 19 *The measures of the outward court.*

1. Utter court. That is, “outer court” (see on ch. 40:17). Verses 1–14 describe chambers for the priests (p. 716, T, T) to the north and to the south of the temple. The Hebrew of this section is very obscure so that it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the architectural details. For this reason no attempt has been made to show the exact form of the building in the diagram (see p. 716, note under Key).

2. Hundred cubits. About 170 ft. (51.9 m.). According to the LXX this is the measurement of the length of the building. The length is the same as that of the temple building (ch. 41:13). These chambers were apparently directly north and south of the temple building and separated from it by the separate place (p. 716, S).

3. Twenty cubits. About 34 ft. (10.4 m.). This is the width of the separate place (p. 716, S) that surrounded the temple on the north, west, and south (see on ch. 41:12). On “utter” see on v. 1.

The pavement. Facing the pavement (p. 716, D) said to belong to the outer court, along the inside of the outer wall (ch. 40:17).

Gallery. The meaning of the Hebrew word thus translated is uncertain.

In three stories. Heb. *bashshelishim*, which may also be translated, “In the third [story].” It is not clear whether the three stories are meant or only the top story.

4. A walk of ten cubits. The LXX reads, “And in front of the chambers was a walk ten cubits [17 ft.; 5.2 m.] in breadth, the length reaching to a hundred cubits [about 200 ft.; 61.5 m.].” This reading is supported by the Syriac.

5. Were shorter. The reason is that the galleries took up some of the space.

6. Pillars of the courts. It is not clear which pillars are referred to. The LXX has no word for “courts.” Some think the pillars apply to the 30 chambers (ch. 40:17).

7. Wall. The exact position of this wall is not clear. Some think that the outside wall of a shorter block of chambers (v. 8) is referred to.

8. Length of the chambers. Some take this to be the measurement of a shorter block of chambers (85 ft.; 25.9 m.) paralleling the longer block and separated from the longer block by the “walk” mentioned in v. 4. This has not been indicated on the diagram (p. 716) because the description is not full enough to clarify the details of the plan.

10. Toward the east. The LXX reads “toward the south” (cf. vs. 12, 13). Verses 10–12 seem to describe another chamber building at the south of the temple identical with the one on the north.

13. Shall eat. Verses 13, 14 describe the functions of these chambers. Under Levitical law the priests were required to eat certain portions of the sacrifices in “the holy place” (Lev. 10:12, 13; Num. 18:9, 10).

14. Lay their garments. These holy chambers served as dressing rooms for the priests.

15. Inner house. The term here refers to the temple area, presumably all that had thus far been measured. Ezekiel now returns to the outer east gate, from where the inspection of the temple area had begun (ch. 40:6).

16. Five hundred reeds. The LXX has no word for “reeds.” Presumably cubits are meant. Notice that the word “reeds” is supplied in v. 20, and that it does not appear in ch. 45:2. Further, the sum of the measurements of the gateways, courts, etc., is 500 cu. each way.

20. Wall. See on ch. 40:5.

CHAPTER 43

1 *The returning of the glory of God into the temple.* 7 *The sin of Israel hindered God’s presence.* 10 *The prophet exhorteth them to repentance, and observation of the law of the house.* 13 *The measures,* 18 *and the ordinances of the altar.*

1. To the gate. See on ch. 42:15.

2. Came from the way. The prophet had seen this glory depart through the east gate of the former Temple (chs. 10:18, 19; 11:1, 23).

Noise of many waters. Compare Rev. 1:15; 14:2; 19:6.

3. The vision which I saw. See chs. 1:4–28; 3:12, 23; 10:15, 22. The various revelations of God’s glory to the prophet have been characteristically similar.

Came to destroy. The earlier visions announced the destruction of Jerusalem.

5. Filled the house. Compare a similar event in connection with the previous sanctuaries (Ex. 40:34, 35; 1 Kings 8:10, 11).

6. I heard him. The voice was doubtless that of God. The speaking came from the house, while the “man” remained with the prophet in the inner court.

7. The place of my throne. In the Hebrew the emphatic position of the word translated “the place of” requires some such addition as “this is,” or “behold”: “This is the place of my throne,” etc.

By their whoredom. The former Temple had been defiled by idol worship within its very precincts (2 Kings 16:11–16; 21:4–7). Some think that literal harlotry is here referred to (2 Kings 23:7; cf. 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12).

Carcases of their kings. There is no historical evidence that any king was buried in the Temple area. A number were buried near the area in the southeast hill (see 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; 22:50; etc.). The LXX gives the reading, “Or by the murders of their princes in the midst of them,” which may reflect the thought intended by the text.

8. *The wall between.* There was only a wall separating the Temple enclosure and the palace enclosure. There was no provision for an outer court as in the new plan (ch. 40:17, 20, 31, 34, 37).

9. *Put away their whoredom.* This was the indispensable prerequisite of Jehovah’s taking up His residence among the people.

10. *Shew the house.* When Israel would see a revelation of God’s love in the glorious plans for the new temple and for their re-establishment as a nation they would “be ashamed of their iniquities” and turn from them. God wanted them carefully to consider His pattern so that it might become to them the inducement to leave off their sinful ways and accept the new provisions.

11. *If they be ashamed.* If Israel showed any interest in the plans and evidenced a change of heart, the prophet was not only to reveal each detail of the plan but to “write it in their sight,” for them to keep.

The tabernacle, and later the Temple, was God’s dwelling place among His chosen people. The rebuilding of the Temple represented the restitution of His purpose to work through Israel for the salvation of the world (see pp. 26–30). If Israel was now “ashamed” of their past record of transgression to the extent that they would, as a nation, go forward with His purpose for them, all that Ezekiel foretold would certainly come to pass (see on Eze. 40:1).

12. *This is the law.* Compare the same formula in the underwriting and superscription of the Levitical laws of the priest code (see Lev. 6:9, 14; 7:1, 37; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:54; 15:32). The reference seems to be to all the preceding instruction.

13. *The measures of the altar.* Verses 13–17 give the description of the altar identified in v. 18 as the altar of burnt offerings. The same cubit is used as for the measurements of the building (see on ch. 40:5). The altar rested on a base 1 cu. (1 ft. 8 in.; 5 m.) high. On top of the base rested successive ledges, each 1 cu. smaller. The topmost ledge, the hearth, was 12 cu. (20 ft. 5 in.; 6.3 m.) square and 4 cu. (6 ft. 8 in.; 2 m.) high. The material from which it was made is not identified. The altar in Solomon’s Temple was made of brass, and was 20 cu. square and 10 cu. high (2 Chron. 4:1). That in the tabernacle was made of shittim wood overlaid with brass and was of considerably smaller dimensions, 5 cu. square and 3 cu. high (Ex. 27:1). According to the Mishnah the altar in Herod’s Temple rested on a base 32 cu. square and was made of unhewn stone.

The altar (p. 716, Q) stood before the temple in the center of the inner court. The altar had stairs (Eze. 43:17) unlike the former (see Ex. 20:26). They led up on the east side, probably so that the priest making the sacrifice would have his back to the rising sun, that there might be no suggestion of sun worship. For God’s abhorrence of sun worship see on Eze. 8:16.

18. *Ordinances of the altar.* Verses 18–27 describe the ceremonies to be performed in connection with the consecration of the altar. They are not the general regulations for the sacrificial worship later to be observed. The former sanctuaries also had special ceremonies of dedication before the altar was brought into ordinary use (Ex. 29:1–46; Lev. 8:11–33; 1 Kings 8:63–66; 2 Chron. 7:4–10).

19. Seed of Zadok. See on 2 Sam. 8:17.

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2 EW 34, 285

CHAPTER 44

1 *The east gate assigned only to the prince.* 4 *The priests reproved for polluting of the sanctuary.* 9 *Idolaters incapable of the priest's office.* 15 *The sons of Zadok are accepted thereto.* 17 *Ordinances for the priests.*

1. Brought me back. That is, from the inner court (see ch. 43:5).

Gate of the outward sanctuary. Or, "the outer gate of the sanctuary" (RSV), here the entire enclosure. See p. 716, B.

2. Hath entered in by it. See ch. 43:4. Sanctified by the divine presence, the gate would not be used for the ordinary purpose of the entrance of the people.

3. The prince. That is, the civil ruler of the future kingdom. The rabbis referred this to the Messiah. But Jesus Christ could not be the prince here mentioned. The prince would offer a sin offering for himself (ch. 45:22), would have sons (ch. 46:16), and would worship by offering sacrifices (ch. 46:2).

To eat bread. Doubtless a reference to sacrificial meals such as were eaten with certain offerings (see Ex. 18:12; Lev. 7:15; Deut. 12:7, 18).

4. The north gate. Since this is described as "before the house," that is, in front of it, the gate must have been the inner north gate (p. 716, I).

Glory of the Lord. See on ch. 43:2–5.

7. Strangers. Or, "foreigners." The aliens living in Israel were allowed to take part in the Passover and other religious rites if they submitted to circumcision (Ex. 12:48). In certain circumstances they were allowed to offer sacrifices (Num. 15:14, 26, 29).

8. Not kept the charge. Instead of keeping the charge of the Temple as they had been appointed to do, the Levites had hired servants of aliens and had allowed them in the Temple court whether they were true worshipers of God or not (Joshua 9:27; Ezra 8:20; cf. Num. 16:40; Zech. 14:21).

9. No stranger. The precaution was designed to prevent the desecration of the temple of the future.

10. Levites. Verses 10–14 describe the official duties of the Levites in the new economy. Because of apostasy and idolatry the Levites would be degraded from the exalted privilege of ministering at the altar.

15. Sons of Zadok. On the historical background of the Zadokite priesthood see on 2 Sam. 8:17; cf. Eze. 40:46.

17. Linen garments. Compare Ex. 28:40–43; 39:27–29; Lev. 6:10.

19. Put off their garments. The priests were to wear their sacrificial robes only when engaged in the service of the temple. Special buildings (p. 716, T, T) were provided near the temple where they were to change their garments before and after ministering at the altar (ch. 42:13, 14).

20. Shave their heads. Compare Lev. 21:1–5; Deut. 14:1. It was the practice of the heathen Egyptians to shave their heads. This was probably one of the reasons for its prohibition for the priests of the Lord. They were not to let their hair grow long as the barbarians did, but to cut it and keep it orderly. Only while under the vow of the Nazirite had they been permitted to let it grow long (Num. 6:5; cf. Lev. 10:6; 21:10).

21. Wine. Compare Lev. 10:9; Josephus *Antiquities* iii. 12. 2.

22. A widow. According to Levitical law a distinction was made between the marriage and mourning laws for the high priest and those for the ordinary priest. The ordinary priest could not marry a divorced woman (Lev. 21:7) but could, apparently, marry a widow, whereas the high priest could not marry a divorced woman, not even a widow, but only a virgin of Israel (Lev. 21:14). Here the ordinary priest's marriage to a widow is restricted.

23. Teach my people. The priests were to be the teachers of the people so that the people might know the truth and be guarded against apostasy. Instruction is essential to Christian growth. There can be no real spiritual growth unless there is continual advancement in knowledge. Israel had earlier been "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). This was not to be repeated in the restored economy. The individual Christian today receives such instruction through the study of the Word and through instructors of the Word. Each day he should add to his fund of spiritual knowledge, and act upon the new light. A change in heart is always accompanied by a clear conviction of Christian duty.

24. Stand in judgment. This had been their previous office under the earlier economy (Deut. 33:10).

25. Come at no dead. This regulation resembled the earlier one (see Lev. 21:1–3).

28. Their inheritance. The order of offerings again reflected the ancient law. On the meat, sin, and trespass offerings see Lev. 2:3; 6:25, 29; 7:6, 7; on the devoted field see Lev. 27:21; on the first fruits see Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Num. 18:13; Deut. 18:3, 4; on the special heave offerings see Num. 15:19–21; 18:19. The priests of the new temple were provided a place of residence in the "obligation," or "holy portion of the land" (Eze. 45:1–5).

31. Dead of itself. Compare Lev. 17:15; 22:8; Deut. 14:21.

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10 Ev 512

23, 24 1T 195

CHAPTER 45

1 *The portion of land for the sanctuary, 6 for the city, 7 and for the prince. 9 Ordinances for the prince.*

1. Divide by lot. The meaning seems to be, "divide by allotment." Actually each tribe was assigned a definite portion (ch. 48:1–29).

An oblation. Heb. *terumah*, literally, "something lifted up," here meaning "an offering," "a present," "a contribution." A small part of this "holy portion of the land" was to be occupied by the sanctuary, the rest given to the priests and Levites. The *terumah* is further described in ch. 48:8–22.

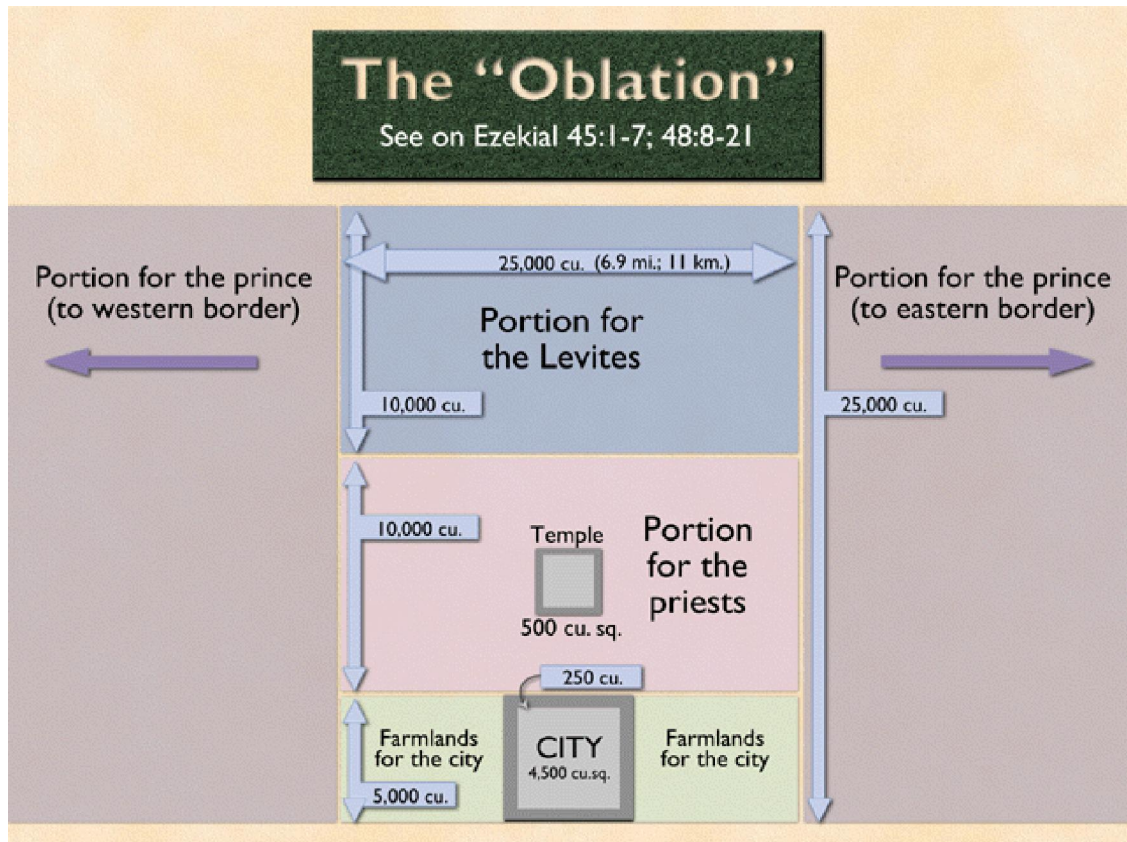
Reeds. This word has been supplied. The question is as to whether "reeds" or "cubits" should be understood. If the former, the area could not be fitted between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. The length would be almost 50 mi. (80 km.). "Cubits" seems more reasonable and more in proportion to the tribal allotments.

Ten thousand. That would be 3.2 mi. (5.12 km.). The total area, as described in vs. 1–6, was 25,000 cubits (6.9 mi.; 11 km.) square. This was made up of three portions: 10,000 (ch. 48:13) at the north for the Levites; 10,000 (ch. 48:10) in the middle for the

priests, in the midst of which was the sanctuary; and the remaining 5,000 (ch. 48:15) for “a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs.”

2. Fifty cubits round about. The temple was situated in a 500 cu. square court (see on ch. 40:5). Here an additional strip of land 50 cu. wide (85 ft.; 25.9 m.) is left open around the outside wall as a further check against its profanation.

⁵



Suburbs. Literally, “an open space” (see on Num. 35:2).

3. Of this measure. See on v. 1.

4. For the priests. This verse describes the priests’ domain (see ch. 48:10).

5. The Levites. The domain of the Levites lay to the north of that of the priests and was to be of the same size (see ch. 48:13).

For twenty chambers. The LXX reads “cities to dwell in,” which appears to give the better sense.

6. Whole house of Israel. This portion, of the same length but only half as wide as the others, was to supply food for those who “serve the city” (ch. 48:18).

7. For the prince. The prince’s portion included all the land eastward and westward from the oblation, presumably to the Mediterranean on the west, and to the Jordan and Dead Sea on the east.

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 40:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

9. Take away your exactions. Verses 9, 10 are an exhortation to the princes to observe justice in their dealings.

11. One measure. Compare Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13–15; Prov. 16:11; Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:10. The ephah was used for dry measures, the bath for the measurement of liquids. Here they are said to be the same capacity and each equal to one tenth of a homer. By modern equivalents an ephah or a bath would be about 5.81 U.S. gal. (see Vol. I, p. 167).

12. The shekel. Compare Ex. 30:13.

Maneh. A transliteration of the Heb. *maneh*. Elsewhere *maneh* is always translated “pound” (1 Kings 10:17; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:71, 72). A “maneh,” also called mina (see RSV), was 50 shekels (see Vol. I, pp. 164, 167, 168). The Hebrew here is obscure.

13. The oblation. Verses 13–15 describe the tax to be paid, presumably to the prince (see v. 16), who in turn would supply the required sacrificial offerings.

17. Prepare. Heb. *‘aśah*, here used in the sense of “provide”, “furnish.” The prince is made responsible for providing the offerings for the various festal sacrifices.

18. In the first month. Verse 18 to ch. 46:15 outline the sacrificial ritual to be followed on special occasions. There are changes from the Mosaic law. Neither Pentecost nor the Day of Atonement is mentioned. But it is quite idle to speculate, as some have done, that these ceremonial features were to be omitted altogether under the new ritual.

19. Take of the blood. Under the Mosaic law, on the Day of Atonement the blood of the sin offerings was sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat within the veil (Lev. 16:14, 15). Under the new ritual in connection with the ceremony of cleansing, blood was put upon the “posts of the house,” the “corners of the settle of the altar,” and “the posts of the gate.”

20. Simple. Heb. *pethi*, “inexperienced.”

21. The passover. The regulations concerning the observance of the Passover were similar to those under the Mosaic law, but with larger offerings (Ex. 12:6; Lev. 23:5–8; Num. 28:16–25).

25. In the seventh month. The reference is to the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16:13, 16). Some hold that the reason it is not so called is that the custom of living in booths was to be discontinued. The sacrifices are considerably less than those required under the Mosaic law (Num. 29:12–38).

CHAPTER 46

¹ *Ordinances for the prince in his worship, 9 and for the people. 16 An order for the prince's inheritance. 19 The courts for boiling and baking.*

1. Gate of the inner court. A special sanctity was attached to the east inner gate (p. 716, H). Compare the regulations concerning the east outer gate (ch. 44:1–3).

2. Post of the gate. This was probably the post at the inner or western end of the gate structure. From this point the prince could watch the priests prepare the offering, but he was not allowed to enter the inner court or to assist in offering the sacrifices.

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 45:3). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

3. At the door. The people who might be present on the sabbaths and new moons were to worship in the outer court near the inner gate. They could not enter the gate structure as could the prince, but were obliged to stay at the entrance.

4. In the sabbath. The sabbath offering that the prince is here commanded to offer is much larger than that required under the Mosaic law, which called for only two yearling lambs (Num. 28:9).

5. Meat offering. Or, “cereal offering” (see on Lev. 2:1).

6. New moon. Compare Num. 28:11–15. There is a decrease in the number of animals required.

7. Meat offering. See on Eze. 46:5. Compare Num. 28:11–15. There is a considerable increase in the requirements.

9. Solemn feasts. A unique arrangement is here prescribed for those present at the solemn feasts that all the males were expected to attend (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). Probably to help secure order and possibly also to avoid their having to turn around, the people were instructed to come in either the north or south gate but to leave from the one opposite.

10. The midst of them. The meaning seems to be that on the yearly occasions the prince was to mingle with the people, joining them in their worship.

11. The solemnities. The proportions are the same as those laid down in vs. 5, 7; ch. 45:24.

12. Voluntary burnt offering. On freewill offerings under the Mosaic law see Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23; 23:38.

13. Every morning. There is a significant change in the daily burnt offering. Ezekiel mentions only the morning sacrifice, whereas under the Mosaic law one was offered both morning and evening (Num. 28:3–8). In either case the offering was to be a lamb, as before. The accompanying meat offering was to be slightly increased.

16. Give a gift. Verses 16–18 set forth regulations regarding lands held by the prince. He had two sections assigned him, one on either side of the oblation (ch. 45:7, 8).

17. Year of liberty. Doubtless the year of jubilee (Lev. 25:8–17).

19. There was a place. For the general location of the kitchens described in vs. 19, 20 see p. 716, U, U. The dimensions are not given.

21. Was a court. See p. 716, V, V, V, V.

22. Joined. The meaning of the Hebrew word thus translated is uncertain. For “courts joined” the LXX reads “a small court.”

23. Of building. These words are supplied. Perhaps masonry is meant.

24. Ministers of the house. Presumably the Levites.

Boil the sacrifice. That is, in preparation for the sacrificial meal.

CHAPTER 47

1 *The vision of the holy waters.* 6 *The virtue of them.* 13 *The borders of the land.* 22 *The division of it by lot.*

1. Door of the house. This is the door of the temple itself.

Waters issued out. What has been said with regard to the interpretation of the temple vision should be borne in mind here (see on ch. 40:1). The vision was a pictorial prophecy describing a literal economy. The presentation sets forth conditions as they might have been, and there seems to be little reason for departing far from the literal language. Whether the stream was fed miraculously or by a series of springs or other

streams is not discussed by Ezekiel. His responsibility was simply to describe what he saw. The intent must have been reasonably plain to the Israelites. Abundant water, such as here portrayed, was the sign of adequate precipitation and resultant prosperity. Such blessings were further emphasized by the mention of the fruit trees and the teeming life in the waters (vs. 7–12).

Inasmuch as these predictions never were fulfilled in their original intent, they will have a measure of fulfillment in the Christian church. It is John the revelator who picks up the imagery of these chapters and explains what features of them will be fulfilled in the new earth (see, for example, Eze. 47:12; cf. Rev. 22:2).

Physical arrangements are frequently also designed to teach spiritual lessons. Here the stream, beginning in a small way, increased as it flowed out toward the desert. So the blessings of the covenant, of which the Israelites were the first recipients, were to flow out, ever increasing until they embraced the whole world. By the same figure the work of the Advent Movement may be illustrated (see 7T 171, 172).

If the stream was miraculously originated and increased, it would stand as a perpetual evidence of the power of an ever-present God working in behalf of His people. Such a demonstration would be similar to the presence of the pillar of fire and cloud that accompanied the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings (Ex. 13:21, 22) and of the miraculous supply of drinking water (Ex. 17:1–7; etc.).

2. *The gate northward.* Possibly because the east inner gate was reserved for the prince (ch. 46:1–8) and the east outer gate was closed (ch. 44:1, 2). On “utter gate” see on ch. 42:1.

3. *Through the waters.* The measurements described in vs. 3–6 graphically portray the phenomenal increase of the waters. At 4,000 cubits (1.1 mi.; 1.8 km.) the trickling stream had become a sizable river that could not be forded (v. 5).

7. *Very many trees.* Compare Rev. 22:2; see on Eze. 47:1.

8. *Desert.* Heb. ‘*arabah*, the depression of the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the valley extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. The modern term Arabah designates only the valley south of the Dead Sea.

The sea. The description here given makes clear that the Dead Sea is intended.

9. *Shall live.* Because of the high mineral content no fish are able to live in the Dead Sea. Doubtless this condition already existed in Ezekiel’s day.

10. *En-gedi.* Literally, “fountain of the kid.” The place is situated in the middle of the west coast of the Dead Sea (see on 1 Sam. 24:1). The site is now called *Tell ej-Jurn*.

En-eglaim. This word occurs only here and cannot be identified.

11. *Marishes.* Marshes.

Salt. Certain areas were not healed, probably to assure an adequate stock of the mineral.

12. *Trees for meat.* In its secondary application this forecast will meet its fulfillment in the tree of life in the midst of the new Eden of God (Rev. 22:2).

13. *Twelve tribes.* Some from each of the twelve tribes were expected to return from captivity. The promises were not limited to Judah and Benjamin, but were for all Israel.

Two portions. Compare Gen. 48:22; Joshua 17:14, 17. Levi’s portion was provided for in the “oblation” (Eze. 45:5, 6) and so the two portions for Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) made up the twelve portions.

14. One as well as another. Literally, “each as his brother,” a phrase meaning “equally.” Ezekiel defines precisely only the northern and southern boundaries of the land. Some have assumed that the various portions assigned to the tribes were strips of territory of more or less equal width, stretching clear across the country from east to west. This cannot be established.

Lifted up mine hand. An expression meaning, “to swear.” On the promise and the oath see Gen. 12:7; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13.

15. The border of the land. There are many similarities between the boundaries given here and those given in Num. 34:1–15. There, however, the southern boundary is given first, doubtless because the Israelites were coming from Egypt. Here the northern boundary may be given first because the people would be returning to Palestine from the north.

From the great sea. The boundary begins at the Mediterranean, but the exact point is not given. Judging from the other geographical points mentioned, the point was probably somewhere near what came to be known as Tripolis. Some begin the border near Tyre.

Hethlon. Mentioned only here and in ch. 48:1. Its location is not certain.

Zedad. This place has been identified with the modern *Ṣadād*, about 58 mi. (92.8 km.) south by east from Hamath.

16. Hamath. A transportation of words permits us here to read, in harmony with the LXX, “entrance of Hamath, Zedad,” etc. The “entrance of Hamath” is thought to refer probably to the modern *Lebweh*, 70 mi. (112 km.) south-southwest of Hamath, or to the valley of the Orontes (see Num. 34:8).

Berothah. The site of this town is not known, though it is probably the same as Berothai (modern *Bereitân*), situated in the valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains.

Sibraim. A border point whose exact site is not known.

Hazar-hatticon. Literally, “the middle village.” All that is known of the place is what can be learned from this passage, namely, that it was on the border of the district of Hauran.

Hauran. This designates the tract of land south of Damascus toward Gilead.

17. Hazar-enan. Possibly the modern *Qaryatein*, 20 mi. (32 km.) east-southeast of Zedad (see on v. 15) and 73 mi. (116.8 km.) northeast of Damascus.

18. The east side. It is difficult to draw this border with precision. Some of the territory east of the Sea of Chinnereth, or Galilee, was probably intended to be included.

19. Tamar. This place has not been definitely identified. It was probably near the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Kadesh. Called Kadesh-barnea in Num. 34:4. Some have identified it with ‘*Ain Qudeirât*, about 73 mi. (116.8 km.) southwest of Hebron, others with ‘*Ain Qedeis*, 5.3 mi. (8.5 km.) farther southeast.

The river. A comparison with Num. 34:5; Joshua 15:4, 47 shows that the reference is to the “river of Egypt,” identified with the modern torrent *Wadi el-‘Arish*, which enters the Mediterranean about 50 mi. southwest of Gaza.

20. The west side. The western boundary was the Mediterranean as in Num. 34:6.

22. By lot. See on ch. 45:1.

To the strangers. More freedom is allowed the strangers here than under the Mosaic law. According to the ancient law, strangers were to be treated with kindness (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 1:16; 24:14), allowed to offer sacrifices (Lev. 17:8), to partake of the Passover if circumcised (Ex. 12:48), but it is doubtful that they held unrestricted property rights. Now those who settled permanently were to be given an inheritance in the tribe they dwelt in. It was God's purpose that the strangers should be drawn to Israel, settle among them, and accept the religion of the true God (see pp. 28, 29).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-237T 172

1 7T 171

8 7T 172

8-12AA 13; 6T 227

CHAPTER 48

1, 23 *The portions of the twelve tribes, 8 of the sanctuary, 15 of the city and suburbs, 21 and of the prince. 30 The dimensions and gates of the city.*

1. Names of the tribes. Chapter 48 describes the distribution of the land and closes with a description of the size of the city and of its gates.

The distribution of the land (vs. 1-7) does not follow too closely that made under Joshua (Joshua 13-19). Age or maternal descent does not particularly seem to have been a guiding criterion. The central portion of the land was to be occupied by the "oblation" (Eze. 45:1-7). It was flanked by the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, that remained faithful longer than the other ten. The tribes of Reuben and Simeon, the two eldest, were placed next to them. Dan was put at the extreme north, where a part of the tribe had formerly lived. There seems to be no particular pattern for the placement of the rest of the tribes.

8. The offering. Or, "the oblation," already described in ch. 45:1-7. On ch. 48:8-14 see on ch. 45:1-7.

15. Place for the city. The territory of the priests and of the Levites each measured 10,000 cubits from north to south, leaving 5,000 of the whole "oblation" to the south of the priest's domain "for the city."

16. The measures. The city was to occupy a square 4,500 cu. on each side, surrounded by an open space 250 cu. all around the outside (v. 17), making the whole area 5,000 cu. (1.6 mi.; 2.6 km.) square. This was the exact width of the space that was left on the south side of the oblation.

18. The residue. The two sections were 10,000 by 5,000 cu. each.

19. All the tribes. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had been largely from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In the new city, which was common property, all the tribes were to have a part.

21. For the prince. The strip of land remaining on the east and west of the "oblation" was for the prince. His territory from north to south extended for the same distance as the oblation. Eastward and westward, it bordered the oblation on one end and extended doubtless to the limits of the land on the other.

23. Rest of the tribes. Verses 23-29 describe the allotments of the remaining five tribes.

28. The border. See on ch. 47:19.

30. The goings out of the city. Verses 30–34 repeat the dimensions of the city so as to describe the three gates on each side. One gate is named for each tribe. Levi is assigned one gate, leaving only one for Joseph.

35. Eighteen thousand. The circumference of the city is 18,000 cu., about 5.8 mi. (9.3 km.). This does not include the “suburbs” mentioned in v. 17.

The city of the future, the New Jerusalem, which John saw coming down from God out of heaven (Rev. 21), shows striking similarities to the city of Ezekiel’s vision. Ezekiel describes the city that might have been; John, the one that will be. The figure of the nation of Israel, constituting God’s people and divided into 12 tribes, is carried through the Bible story. The New Jerusalem, whose inhabitants are redeemed from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, is shown with the names of the 12 tribes inscribed upon its gates. In Bible figure the redeemed, no matter of what race, are represented as being assigned a place among one of the 12 tribes (Rom. 9–11; Gal. 3:29).

The picture of Israel in the land of Babylon, about to be delivered and restored to its own land, with the associated destruction of Babylon, forms the imagery for a large section of the book of Revelation. The figure is used to describe the Israel of God in their final struggles against the powers of evil, again termed Babylon, followed by the destruction of Babylon and the glorious deliverance of the church. See on Jer. 50:1.

The Lord is there. With these fitting words, by which the new city is designated, the prophet Ezekiel brings his prophetic messages to a close. It had fallen to his lot to announce the withdrawal of the divine presence because of the moral corruption of his people. It became his privilege also to announce the remedy for sin; and to declare, in vivid imagery, the glorious prospect of the future that might have been realized if Israel had accepted the divine remedy so graciously offered to them (see pp. 26–32).

Whether Ezekiel lived to see a few of his countrymen return under the beneficent decree of the Persian king cannot be known. Could he have known that his writings would be preserved in the Sacred Canon, he might have taken comfort in the prospect that some future generation would take hold of the message his fellow captives had despised.

The challenge is for us. The new Israel of God is about to enter a land far more glorious than that immediately offered to Ezekiel’s generation. Entrance, again, is based upon certain prerequisites. Already there has been a delay in complying wholeheartedly with the conditions. This time, however, there cannot be an indefinite postponement, for no longer is the restoration to be on a national basis. When the moment arrives, God will gather from all lands those who have made personal preparation. These will inherit the rich promises, and dwell in the city, prefigured in Ezekiel’s prophetic imagery, and divinely named, “The Lord is there” (Rev. 21; 22).

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Eze 45:19). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

